STREET SPIRIT

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JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE BAY AREA

Suitcase Clinic

An Oasis for the Homeless

As one of five foot washers at work this evening, Jenifer Stitchman said, "We do this out of our love for humanity. It's our way to express our love of humanity in a safe way while interacting with others that may be feeling abused by a society that treats them like criminals just because they are poor or homeless."



A Suitcase Clinic volunteer washes the feet of a woman at the Women's Shelter. Photos by Lydia Gans

by Lynda Carson

For the weary-eyed road traveler coming in from out of doors, out of state or out of mind, Berkeley's Suitcase Clinic beckons like a little oasis. At this oasis, homeless people are freely offered such much-needed services as urgent medical care, social services, dental care, veterinary services, chiropractic care, optometric care and free eyeglasses, acupuncture, food supplies, haircutting, foot washing and massage, legal assistance, manicures, meals, clothing and a limited number of vouchers for hotels.

The Suitcase Clinic is also a crossroads where young pre-med students and the local homeless population have a chance to spend an evening together on a weekly basis, and for a brief moment the cultural barriers of American life seem to disappear. This clinic helps to serve all of those involved, no matter which side of the economic spectrum they come from.

Rich or poor, young, old, or middle-aged, the clinic addresses the needs of those being served, as well as those offering their volunteer services as a means to share their humanity with others.

Nothing can fully compensate the homeless wandering unfortunates who may have lost all of their possessions, jobs, friends or loved ones, while believing that they really have reached the end of the road. That lonely road may finally lead them directly to the services of the Suitcase Clinic in Berkeley on a Monday or Tuesday night if they need medical care, legal help, a chiropractor, or the services of an optometrist. Perhaps they need the healing touch of a foot massage and a haircut. Or maybe they happen to enjoy playing basketball, or just want to watch television.

Any or all of the above and other services are provided at no cost to the clients that show up at the various clinics. Affectionately known as "The Clinic" by its student volunteers and the homeless who seek refuge there, it is a happening unto itself, as well as a model of casework that is quickly spreading to other university towns across the nation.

Berkeley's Suitcase Clinic was founded by undergraduate pre-med students from the UCB-UCSF Joint Medical Program and the UCB School of Public Health in 1989. According to its mission statement, the Suitcase Clinic exists to promote the health and overall well-being of homeless and low-income individuals. Most donations come from fundraising and grant writing. The City of Berkeley provides around $4000 annually to help keep the legal clinic operating.

Cold, lonely nights

The Clinic was formed when university students really tried to grasp what it's like to reside at locations without running water, toilets, electricity, environmental controls, or a place to rest and stay warm on a cold, lonely night while you stare up at the stars until your mind wanders off into a restless slumber.

Take one moment to reflect on what it's like to be lonely on a cold winter night, sitting alone in a truck or car all night long listening to the pitter-patter of the rain drops hitting the roof until dawn. That is, of course, if you are lucky enough to even have a vehicle to protect yourself from the storm and other hazards of life.

Homeless people know full well the challenges they face on a daily basis in order to survive and maintain some semblance of dignity and humanity.

It's the little things in life that count. You may be down on your luck, and you may be down to your last quarter, as your mind maps out a survival routine for the day to get you from here till tomorrow without landing at Santa Rita Jail on some trumped-up charge meant to enrich the fat cats feeding off the criminal in-justice system.

But, you somehow made it through another week, and you are ready to enter this oasis of compassion and to join the human race for one comforting evening to fulfill your human needs so that you can keep on trucking just a little bit longer.



The Suitcase Clinic at the Women's Shelter even offers manicures and nail polish.

Maybe for just another week, until the clinic doors open up again for our brothers and sisters, and they are lovingly embraced by the Suitcase Clinic.

Tuesday Night General Clinic

Julia Wildwood, an attractive homeless woman from Seattle, needs reading glasses, so she showed up on July 15 at the general clinic in the First Presbyterian Church at 2407 Dana Street in Berkeley. Julia was pleasantly surprised that her input for this story was requested and offered her consent the moment she heard that it was for *Street Spirit*. "I love that paper," Julia said, as she quietly sat at a table taking an eye exam being offered for free by one of the clinic volunteers.

Wearing a lovely purple top with a tan-colored vest and black pants, Julia looked stylish in her own way as she described how the clinic has been helping her out. Not only has Julia sought the optometric services the clinic offers, but, attorney Osha Neumann has been her guardian angel lately in defending her from the Berkeley cops who have arrested her for sleeping on the steps of Berkeley City Hall.

"I landed at Santa Rita for sleeping outside, but was never charged," said Julia. The Berkeley cops often arrest people and lock them up as punishment without ever charging them for an offense. Julia said it appears to be a big racket to make a lot of money for those involved in the criminalization of the poor.

"I spent 30 hours at Santa Rita for sleeping on the steps of City Hall," said Julia in exasperation, "and it was all for nothing, and just ain't fair. The Suitcase Clinic is a safe haven for me to go to for services that I no longer can afford."

See **The Suitcase Clinic** *page 15*

Homeless Action Center Is a Lifeline to the Disabled

by Lydia Gans



Lydia Gans photo

From left, Patricia Wall, April Davis, Steve Weiss, Lisa Lunsford, Zena Sherman, and Lindsay Updike in the HAC office.

"It's not really about the money, it's about clients. Some clients are amazing, interesting, courageous people — every last one of them, even the most irritating ones. And some of them just cannot get a break, no matter how much they try. Circumstances conspire to keep them on the fringes." — Patricia Wall, executive director, Homeless Action Center

The Homeless Action Center (HAC) is a nonprofit legal agency in Berkeley that has been "providing SSI advocacy and other legal services since 1990." Yet this modest statement of purpose doesn't come close to describing all they do.

The function of HAC is to help homeless people, or those on the edge of homelessness, to get federal benefits, primarily SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and Medi-Cal, which goes with it. But because the process is terribly convoluted and can take as much as a year or even longer, the HAC staff have found it necessary to help people survive while they wait.

Their office is jammed full of cluttered desks, file cabinets and a large conference table, people in various states of frustration milling about, and animals happily treating the place as their own private playground. The commotion makes one wonder how anything gets done. Yet the staff of seven and a number of interns and other volunteers help hundreds of desperate people to literally survive.

When a disabled person tries to get federal SSI benefits, the process begins with filing a complicated application requiring all sorts of supporting material. About 60 percent of the time, the initial application is denied, which means one or more appeals to higher authorities. HAC staffers have to help at every step of the way.

April Davis, HAC program specialist, explained: "It's an application process where you have to prove through paper documents that you're eligible for benefits. So you have to have had medical treatment. There's not a lot of health care for the poor, especially for the uninsured; and so a huge part of our work is trying to hook people up with doctors who can see them and treat them for what's wrong, so that we can build *a paper trail to prove to Social Security*" that they really are disabled.

The problem is that the SSI application is handled by clerks in cubicles who never see the applicant. It isn't until the third appeal that the applicant appears in person and with an advocate before a judge.

Davis said, "We find that it's very frustrating for people, the process, so we try to make it as easy as possible, try to do as much of the work as we can for people, try to communicate with Social Security on their behalf, try to explain what's happening, help them document their condition, and encourage them to hang in there."

Getting together all the documentation is another formidable task, much of which is handled by Zena Sherman. As project manager, part of her job is to go to all sorts of offices and make copies of all the client's medical, educational, and financial records — anything relevant that can help their SSI application.

Most of HAC's clients have mental disabilities. These are the people whose disabilities are the least visible and who are the most likely to need help. HAC Executive Director Patricia Wall described some of the characteristics of her agency's approximately 200 current cases. Half are men and half are women. Of the women, half have children.

Looking at these more closely, Wall said, "We found that the people who are being sanctioned by the welfare department, those are people that are not complying with Welfare to Work rules. One out of two of them has a disability that qualifies them for SSI. Some of them have been hidden on welfare for many, many years. So there was no reason that the welfare department would ever know that they had a disability till they tried to send them to work and it didn't work out.

"Lots of them have mental health problems, or post traumatic stress disorder from being survivors of domestic violence. Some of them just have depression and anxiety. And some of them are coping with incredibly difficult circumstances, family situations that are stressful, and homelessness, and joblessness, and poverty and kids with problems. Who wouldn't have depression and anxiety in those circumstances? Nationwide, about 40 per*cent of the folks on CalWorks or AFDC* have clinical depression."

People who were injured at work make up another large segment of the client population. "A huge number of our clients have been injured while working, about a third," Wall said. Often, the workers' compensation system failed them, she explained, or "the employer was uninsured, or the workers' comp claim got settled and was inadequate to care for somebody for the rest of their life. So that's how people end up on long-term disability."

Ultimately there are so many people — sometimes as many as 40 come in on a single day — with so much need that HAC staffers end up doing far more than legal representation. Pat Wall gives a condensed version of her agency's real work: "Most of what we do is really mopping up the failures of other systems that didn't help our clients very adequately, mopping up the failures of the welfare system, the health care system, the mental health system, the workers' comp system."

April Davis is working on a positive new approach for people with psychiatric disabilities who are on SSI. The purpose is to help them return to work without losing their benefits and their all-important health insurance until they are certain that the job will work out. HAC, together with the Center for Independent Living and the East Bay Community Law Center, is working with the Social Security Administration to allow people to have a period of time to try out a job situation while not losing their eligibility for benefits.

Under the previous regulations, once a *person takes a job, they lose their SSI* benefits; and if it turns out that the job doesn't work out, they have to start the application process all over again. The new approach gives a trial period to allow people to make a plan, get some training and prepare to transition realistically back into the work force. Davis has a number of clients going through this new process.

Because homelessness or imminent homelessness is pervasive among HAC's clients, part of Zena Sherman's job is being case manager for about 21 clients who are in the Shelter Plus Care program. Food security is another concern. HAC is starting a new campaign to help people get food stamps. The application, which until recently was 48 pages long(!), has been cut down to three pages. HAC staff are circulating the new applications and encouraging people to fill them out and take them to the welfare office.

Pat Wall's most recent undertaking — along with the myriad issues she deals with and problems she solves — is a campaign to get homeless people to register and vote. Local and national politics have such a profound effect on poor and homeless people, yet hardly any of them participate. Wall estimates that fewer than 10 percent of the clients are even registered to vote. She is talking about holding discussions, forums, voter education in shelters and drop-in centers, wherever homeless people are; as well as making sure they register and then getting them to their polling places on election day.

Wall envisions doing "what you and I do over the kitchen table with our friends, which is go over the enormous ballot and figure out which way we're going to vote. I want to recreate some of that. I'm excited about that idea."

At the Homeless Action Center, a prodigious amount of work is accomplished by the small staff. Most of them could probably find easier jobs elsewhere. The attorneys could certainly earn a lot more money in other kinds of practices.

But, as Wall said, "It's not really about the money, it's about clients. Some clients are amazing, interesting, courageous people — every last one of them, even the most irritating ones. And some of them just cannot get a break, no matter how much they try. Circumstances conspire to keep them on the fringes.

"I think of us as kind of a resting point for people who are trying to get it back together; and we try to be as barrier-free as possible. Which makes it an incredibly difficult place to practice law."

Knowing that they've helped hundreds of people get secure housing and medical care, and knowing that there are hundreds more who have hope that their lives will improve because they have dedicated lawyers advocating for them, has to be its own reward.

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Street Spirit is published by the **American Friends Service Committee.** Homeless vendors receive 50 papers a day for free, earn income and self-reliance, and educate the community about homeless issues and social justice. We accept no advertising so as to maintain complete editorial independence. American Friends Service Committee shoulders the entire printing costs of more than $3,000.00 each month to give our vendors a job providing a positive alternative to panhandling. Please **donate** or **subscribe** to ***Street Spirit*** ! Help us remain an independent voice for justice!

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Oakland City Council Attacks Low-Income Renters

by Lynda Carson

In an act certain to harm low-income renters, the Oakland City Council voted on July 15 to rip away rent control from thousands of tenants residing in two-unit and three-unit buildings. Declaring that tenants and smaller landlords have a "special relationship" with one another, the City Council's action removes rent-control protections from an estimated 3,000 units in Oakland.

Current Oakland law prohibits landlords from imposing unlimited rent hikes; rather, limited rental increases are tied to the annual cost of living by the Rent Adjustment Ordinance. The council's action exempts owner-occupied duplexes and triplexes from this rent-control law, so at least 3,000 renters of these units may now face unrestrained rent increases, and possibly evictions-for-profit.

Many of the affected tenants live in low-income units in the flatlands of Oakland, and the City's own housing staff predicted that the council action will likely increase their rents.

The Oakland City Council must vote once more on a final version to make this proposed amendment into a new law. The measure was scheduled to be voted on for final passage at the July 29, 2003, council meeting, but Nancy Nadel and Jane Brunner pulled the item off the consent calendar so it could be discussed further. It is scheduled to come back for the final vote on Tuesday, September 16.

Only City Councilmembers Jean Quan, Nancy Nadel and Jane Brunner voted against this repeal of rent control.

"If I wanted to make it known that I have a special relationship with my landlord, I certainly do not need some dumbass Oakland Councilmember to pretend to make that declaration for me, and it would never be the sort of relationship where I would be willing to give up all of my rights as a renter," said Donavon Wilson, a tenant driven out of town by greedy Oakland landlords a few years ago.

City Councilmember Danny Wan publicly tried his best to sell this odious declaration to resistant Oaklanders, stating that Oakland's rent control laws were never meant to protect renters from small landlords, only the large landlords.

Not so, said Wilson Riles Jr., a former member of the Oakland City Council. "This knocks a hole into an already weak ordinance," Riles said. The whittling away of rental protections is starting with one group of tenants, and will move onto the next group, Riles said, adding that it "needs to be stopped dead in its tracks before this injustice goes on any further."

Sirena Cardenas, a 14-year-old singer and dancer and Oakland resident, said, "I don't think that this is fair. People have a lot of kids and the rents are so high that they can't pay them off as it is."

Longtime Oakland renter Yesenia Rios said, "I do not believe that landlords should have total control over tenants. It scares me to think of someone else having total control over my bank account just because they become a landlord. And no one should have the right to raise the rents to an unlimited amount, which is what this new ordinance allows the landlords to do."

Oakland renter Corrine James, who recently had a lengthy battle fighting off an eviction, said she is in total shock at the City Council's actions. "Why do they think that they can do this to us?" asked James. "It will only cause more displacement, homelessness and higher rents. The rent cap has always been there to protect us since it began. I worked so hard for the passage of Measure EE, along with so many others in Oakland, and now it only takes a handful of City Councilmembers to believe that they have the right to sell me down the river to some rich landlords?"

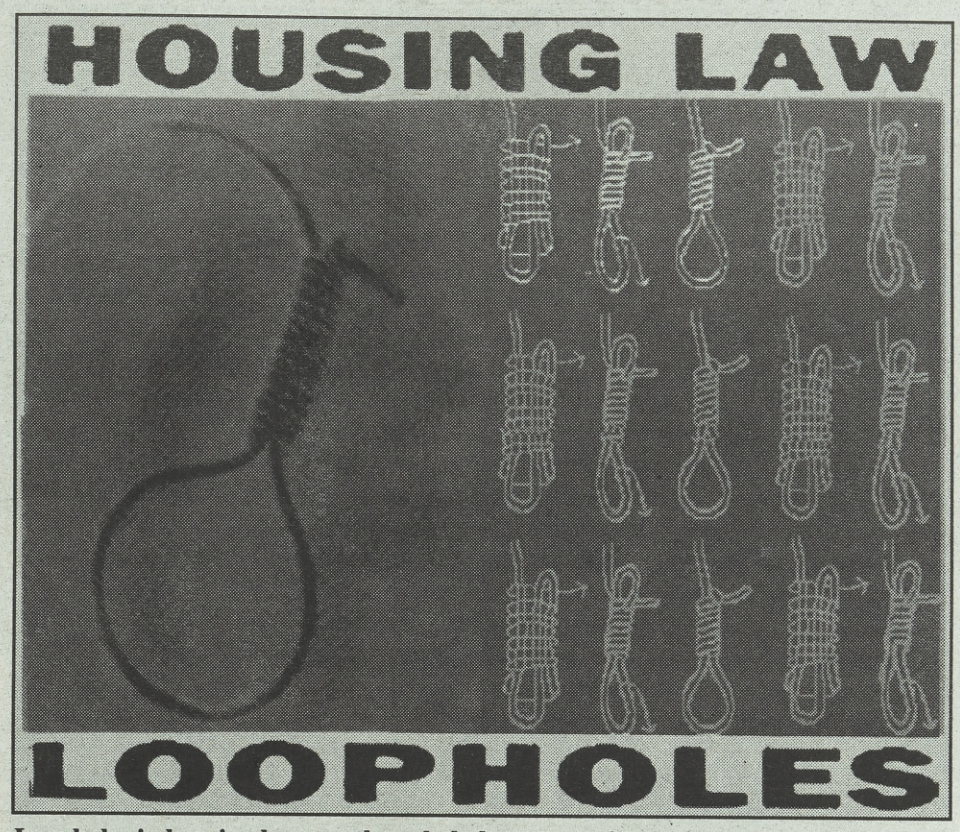
Local tenants were not surprised to see John Holmgren of the Oakland Realtors Association and Steve Edrington of the Rental Housing Association of Northern Alameda County (RHANAC) lurking about the council chambers to make sure the vote went their way. Oakland tenants know the smell of dirty money when it's around, and they know trouble when these fellows show up to make sure that their City Council stooges do their bidding.

The absurd result of this drastic amendment is that the "special relationship" being declared by the council will result in the affected renters being totally stripped of all their rights to defend themselves from rent increases or evictions when the new ordinance becomes law.

Adding insult to injury, the council vote also amounts to a huge money grab for an extra $465,000 in rent control fees allegedly to be used to operate the Rent Adjustment Program. Tenants know that eventually the annual $24.00 fee will be passed along by the landlords to them in the form of higher rents.

According to a city staff report, Measure EE, the Just Cause for eviction law, covers 19,000 rental units that do not have to pay the $24.00 annual fee for the Rent Adjustment Program because the

See **Oakland City Council Attacks** *page 13*



Loopholes in housing laws can have lethal outcomes for renters, including economic desperation, eviction and homelessness.

Art by S.F. Print Collective

The Oakland City Council's proposed new law is good for realtors, bankers, and landlords; but it's bad for tenants getting fleeced during the never-ending process of rent hikes. This scheme does not produce more housing units, and only further exploits the renters that lose their rights to fight unfair rent increases or unfair evictions.

Alta Bates

(for Gwendolyn Williams)

by Claire J. Baker

Hospital of my birth
you shame me —
thrusting the homeless
back on the streets too soon
when you may well have
EMPTY ROOMS FOR RESPITE.

Your landscaped patio garden
is restful; you appear
smoothly functioning, efficient.
And so
along with updating doctors
on the latest treatments,
medications, procedures,
equipment to diagnose & heal,
perhaps your wellness team
needs fresh lessons
in humanitarianism…

Hospital which delivered me into
my mother's arms, you could
keep your promise, be a model:
the homeless have no arms
in which to collapse.
People's Park is the best bed
many can manage, walking
to the park over a mile.
You can't even offer bus fare?
In the park, their surgical wounds
are left uncleaned, bandages
unchanged.
Remember the Hippocratic Oath…

Street Spirit

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Street Spirit — A Partnership Between AFSC and BOSS

AFSC

American Friends Service Committee

Street Spirit is a publication of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). AFSC was founded by Quakers in 1917 to provide conscientious objectors an opportunity to aid civilian victims during World War I. Today it carries on programs of service, social justice, and peace in 22 countries and 43 areas in the U.S.

In 1947, the AFSC and Friends Service of Britain together received the Nobel Peace Prize for their "silent help from the nameless to the nameless." AFSC seeks to address the root causes of poverty, injustice, and war. We are called to confront, nonviolently, powerful institutions of oppression, violence and injustice.

The AFSC believes people can change the world. Our job is to share skills, staff, and resources, and help communities organize. Once we get involved, we tend to stay: 45 years with farm workers in the Central Valley, 50 years in the California prison system, 50 years with the American Indian community, 17 years with homeless people in the Bay Area, 30 years working for Middle East peace.

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BOSS

Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency

Street Spirit vendor program is directed by Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS). BOSS was founded in 1971 to serve the deinstitutionalized mentally disabled. Over the years, the organization added programs to serve all homeless and poor people.

Today BOSS operates 30 programs in Berkeley, Oakland, and Hayward serving 3,000 families and individuals each year. Our work targets four outcomes — affordable housing, improved health, economic security, and social justice.

BOSS pursues its mission in two ways:

(1) Providing comprehensive services to help people gain independence — shelters, housing, education, training, employment, health and mental health care, youth and family services; and

(2) Attacking the root causes of poverty and homelessness through policy advocacy, grassroots organizing, community planning, and fighting to include the voice of poor people in designing and implementing solutions.

For more information, call (510) 649-1930 or visit http://www.self-sufficiency.org. If you need housing or services, please call (510) 843-3700.

Forced Treatment: Coming Soon to a County Near You?

by Robert Norse

For years, survivors of California's mental health system fought a drive by State Assemblywoman Helen Thomson (D-Davis) to expand state powers to forcibly incarcerate and drug those labeled "mentally ill."

Advocates were able to stop AB 1028 and AB 1800, earlier versions of the bill. But on September 28, 2002, Governor Davis signed AB 1421, which allows counties to opt into an involuntary outpatient commitment [IOC] program. IOC significantly increases the pressure to take psychiatric medication. For counties who choose the IOC program, AB 1421 significantly weakens the protections of the Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Act.

The LPS Act mandates that people cannot be forcibly held in a psychiatric hospital (or 5150ed) unless they pose a threat to themselves or others, or are "gravely disabled" (i.e. unable to provide the necessities of life). AB 1421 allows the forcible restraint and medication of a person suffering from a serious mental illness "if the person's relapse or deterioration... would be likely to result in grave disability or serious harm to the person or others." This seriously weakens the civil rights protections of the LPS Act.

Additionally, the person must (1) be deteriorating to the point at which they might be dangerous to themselves or others or gravely disabled — again a weaker protection; (2) have been offered voluntary services and refused them; and (3) be offered the "least restrictive alternative."

Finally, one of these two conditions must also apply: (1) A person must have had "a history of lack of compliance that has caused them to be in a hospital or incarcerated [i.e. a jail] in the last 36 months;" or (2) must have made "acts, attempts, or threats of serious violent behavior toward self or others within the last 48 months." Although the list of conditions is longer, the wording of AB 1421 makes it significantly easier to ensnare and coerce an unwilling "patient" and force them to take "medication."

Robert Whitaker, former *Boston Globe* reporter, documented the toxicity of neuroleptic drugs (such as Thorazine and Haldol) and "atypical" antipsychotic drugs (Zyprexa, Clozaril, and Risperdal) in his book, *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill* [see *Street Spirit* interview with Whitaker, June 2003].

Jane Kysor is an independent PIRC [Psychiatric Inmates Rights Collective] advocate from Santa Cruz who has been monitoring psychiatric abuses for many years. She commented, "The hazards and toxicity of psychiatric drugs are well-known. The mental health system already uses untruths and exaggerations to hold people. This bill makes it potentially much worse. The only free services the system provides are drugs, restraint, and electroshock. Instead of forcing more drugs on people, we need to start detoxification programs for those who want to get off the psych drugs."

Virginia Knowlton, head legislative public relations worker at Protection and Advocacy, tried to get Davis to veto AB 1421. "We took a pummeling from the *L.A. Times*. There's so much stigma and misunderstanding of people with psychiatric disabilities. The media falsely claims that people lack insight into their own treatment, so they have to be coerced."

"In New York City," Knowlton notes, Kendra's Law — a similar bill — was used "as a sort of street-cleaning measure. The numbers were overwhelmingly black male. It was skewed in a racially, economically discriminatory fashion."

Sally Zinman, an activist since 1977 in the consumer/survivor movement, is the executive director of the California Network of Mental Health Clients (CNMHC). She cites a CNMHC report that notes that 83 percent of the 2000 court-ordered, involuntary druggings in the state of New York were in New York City. In New York state, 51 percent of the clients are white, making up 29 percent of the commitments. Although 24 percent of the population of New York City is black, African Americans make up 42 percent of the commitments there.

The criteria used is not the "serious violent behavior" that was used to sell Kendra's Law to the public. Rather, in 95 percent of the cases, "repeat appearances in hospitals" is the standard used to force people to take drugs under IOC.

"IOC, as it's used in New York," Zinman concludes, "has been used to sweep homeless people up off the streets of New York City. It's a chamber of commerce tool, not a mental health tool. It has been racially targeted. It cost the state $140,000,000, half of it for administrative, judicial, investigative infrastructure."

After all that expense, where are the services? "All the research proved is what the people need are the services," she said. "The Bellevue Study and Rand Report [on IOC] pointed out it was the existence of the services that made the difference."

Indeed, it is the requirement for services in California's AB 1421 that may make it completely unworkable on a county level. Kendra's Law, Zinman explained, didn't require services be available. But AB 1421 requires that counties must not reduce any voluntary programs if they institute the easier forced drugging system in AB 1421.

Also, housing and community support services are required locally before AB 1421 can be chosen, as well as access to substance abuse services, psychological counseling, vocational rehabilitation, and veteran's services. This lessens the likelihood that county boards of supervisors will "opt into" the AB 1421 system in the current budget crisis. Counties can't take any money for this program from any voluntary services, nor can they decrease any current services that are voluntary.

CARES (Coalition Advocating for Rights, Empowerment, and Services) was formed four years ago "to guard against the expansion of forced mental health treatment and to work for increased access to and development of effective, voluntary community mental health services."

CARES details many obstacles to instituting AB 1421, including open discussion, citizen planning, and citizen review provisions with public hearings to assure voluntary services would not be adversely affected. Even if housing and services become available, the county must show that these services are also available voluntarily. Effective counsel must be made available at every stage of the forced treatment process, according to the law, with additional expenses for evaluations, contempt of court orders, court monitoring of 60-day affidavits of need for the program, etc. Training and education for additional personnel would add an extra expense.

A December 2002 Newsalert on the CNMHC website titled "AB 1421 Fight Goes to the Counties" noted: "Although the CNMHC and allies were able to stall initiatives to expand forced treatment for four years, ultimately we could not stop this well-funded, highly promoted, and media-supported effort. However, there is no state-mandated patient commitment program and the LPS laws have not been changed. The battle now goes to the local — county — level. And the CNMHC and its allies will be there to fight this regressive idea from becoming a reality in any county."

Also, AB 1421 sunsets in five years.

At present, Los Angeles County is the only county to implement AB 1421, Zinman reports. However, the Los Angeles system targets individuals who have been adjudicated incompetent to stand trial in misdemeanor cases and hence would go to a state hospital anyway. The point of intake would be Los Angeles County's Mental Health Court.

The guinea pigs in this AB 1421 "experiment" have criminal charges against them, and so are already forcibly confined. Those with mental disabilities are picked up more often for poverty-related crimes (trespass, petty theft). But how can those already locked up be "voluntarily" offered all the services that AB 1421 is required to provide along with its toxic tranquilizer treatment? Zinman's group may sue L.A. County to stop the charade.

Helen Thomson, author of AB 1421, who is now on the Yolo County Board of Supervisors, is likely to press for forced treatment in her county as well.

What about the spectacle of "Needles on Wheels" — court-mandated psychiatric techs and police coming to your house to force you to take meds? Thanks to the mental health megalith, millions of consumers are hooked on these "medications" that can cause tardive dyskinesia and diabetes. Overuse of these drugs creates vast profits for the huge pharmaceutical industry.

"Take your pill or take a ride to the psych ward," is actually a reality today in California where the court has ordered such a procedure, even where AB 1421 has not been approved. Zinman suspects such humiliating and coercive intrusions are going on more widely under IOC in North Carolina and Wisconsin, two of the 40 other states that have passed the IOC law.

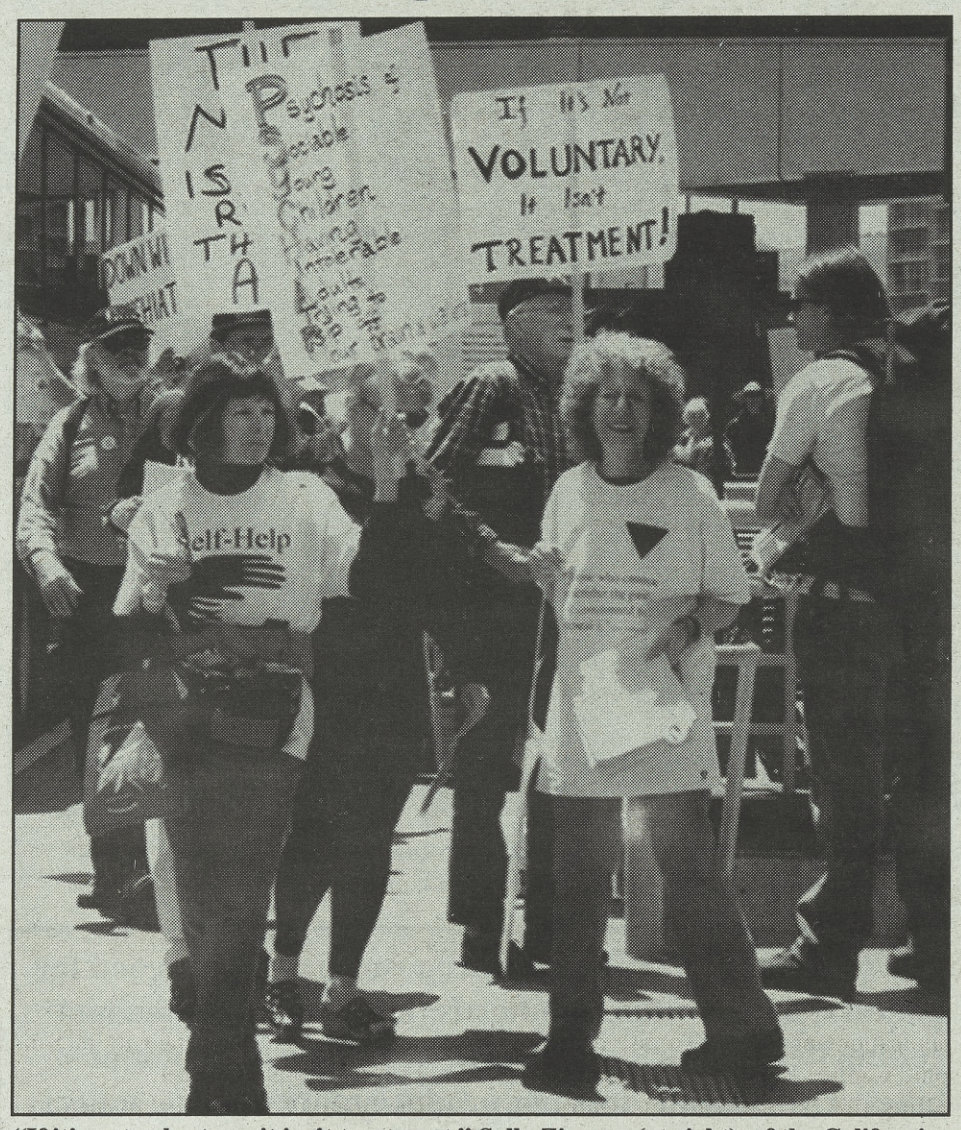
Even those who claim financial benefits for court-ordered IOC (by replacing costly hospital stays with cheaper, court-mandated drugging at home), such as the American Association of Community Psychiatrists, also note very real problems such as "distorting effects on patient-clinician relationships," the vulnerability of people in poverty to misuses of IOC, unclear findings on whether violent behavior is reduced and "treatment" is adhered to, and danger of its being used as an inappropriate substitute for real services.

Voluntary services, Zinman says, are what make the difference. Studies of a trial IOC program at Bellevue Hospital in New York City in 1995 and a broader Rand Corporation study showed that it was the availability of services, not the coercion, that drew clients to the program.

AB 34, a California law expanding voluntary services, has provided housing, counseling, support, and medication voluntarily. A May 2002 report to the state legislature found that the days spent in a psychiatric hospital dropped 65.5 percent for those enrolled in the program, and jail time dropped 81.5 percent. Homelessness dropped 71.9 percent. And 83 percent of those served voluntarily stayed in the program. Authorities calculated a savings to the public of $23 million in reduced hospitalization, homelessness, and jail costs.

Zinman summed up: "Given the budget crisis, the idea that any county would divert funds from current programs that are working for an approach that is unproven and could be damaging would be criminal and illegal. AB 1421 isn't meant to force people to take housing, counseling, services or jobs; it's there to force drugs on people."

To learn more about AB 1421, check out www.cnmhc.org, the website of the California Network of Mental Health Clients.



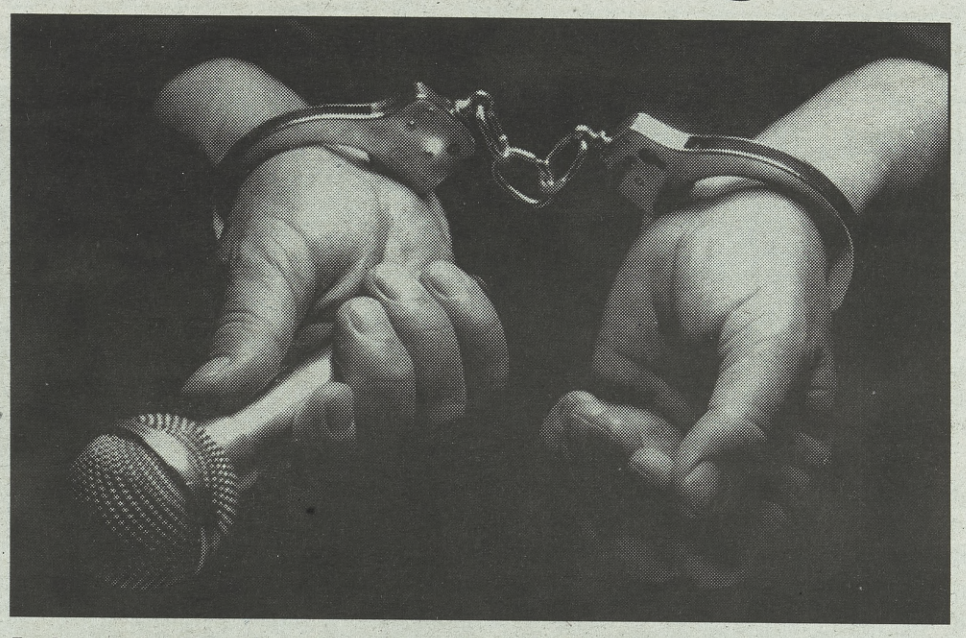
"If it's not voluntary, it isn't treatment." Sally Zinman (at right), of the California Network of Mental Health Clients, protests the American Psychiatric Association.

"Given the budget crisis, the idea that any county would divert funds from current programs that are working for an approach that is unproven and could be damaging would be criminal and illegal. AB 1421 isn't meant to force people to take housing, counseling, services or jobs; it's there to force drugs on people." — Sally Zinman

S.F. Liberation Radio's Struggle Against FCC Threats

The airwaves of America's cities, filled with the ravings of right-wing talk show lunatics, had to be carefully protected from any fictitious threat of interference.

by Richard Edmondson



In threatening low-power FM stations, the FCC is handcuffing the free press.

Many years ago, when I used to serve food with Food Not Bombs, I noticed that repression has a funny way of backfiring on the repressors. Every time the San Francisco police would launch some new and particularly outrageous measure, usually involving the mass jailing of people for serving food to the hungry, the very next Food Not Bombs meeting would find us swamped with newcomers wishing to volunteer.

The same phenomenon seems to be playing out now with San Francisco Liberation Radio (SFLR). The ten-year-old "pirate" station was visited by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on Wednesday, July 2, and served with a notice of "illegal broadcasting."

The weeks following this unambiguous knock on the door saw an overwhelming outpouring of public support — as well as a series of events which seemed to come on faster than a downhill racer at the Tour de France. News reports about the FCC visit appeared in the *Chronicle* and over KPFA.

Will the FCC return with a retinue of federal agents and shut down the station? No one could say for sure, but the consensus was that sitting idle wasn't an especially prudent option. After all, our sister station across the bay, Berkeley Liberation Radio, had been raided with all of its equipment seized less than a year before.

SFLR DJs held emergency meetings and began a massive lobbying effort, the latter resulting in a resolution of support being taken up by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and scheduled for a committee hearing on July 31.

"The resolution has wider support than just the members whose names appear," Supervisor Matt Gonzalez told SFLR supporters during board proceedings on July 22. "So you shouldn't believe it's only the four of us (who introduced the legislation) supporting this item."

These events in San Francisco took place against a national backdrop that included congressional debate over new FCC regulations promising another wave of media mergers similar to that unleashed by the 1996 Telecommunications Act. The implications of this are so dire that even some Capitol Hill Republicans are now calling the current state of affairs "an alarming amount of concentration."

"Alarming" for a Republican probably means the undertaker's already measuring the coffin.

And that is precisely what makes the FCC's move on SFLR at this time so outrageous — and every bit as holistically insane as those long-ago food-dumping spectacles in the now-covered-over Civic Center fountain.

On June 2 — one month to the day before its agents knocked on SFLR's door — the FCC voted to relax caps on the number of TV stations one company can own, and largely abolished a decades-old ban on cross-ownership of newspapers and TV stations in the same market.

While Michael Powell, the diversity-in-media train wreck who heads up the FCC, has called critics' objections "garbage," the House of Representatives nonetheless voted on July 23 to roll back at least the TV ownership cap to its previous level. The new rules are under similar fire in the Senate.

But will a congressional debate on media diversity, or even a S.F. Board of Supervisors resolution on the local level, stop the feds from shutting down SFLR should it come to that? The proposed local resolution would at least make it clear, in unequivocal terms, just exactly how the elected representatives of the City of San Francisco feel about the matter.

"The Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco urges the Federal Communications Commission not to interfere with the functioning of San Francisco Liberation Radio, 97.3 FM," the proposed measure states.

It's true that opposition from local governments didn't do a lot to stop the war in Iraq; nor has it provided a panacea of protection to medical marijuana distributors. Yet the supes' resolution is perhaps symptomatic of a growing public awareness of how dangerous to democracy the concentration of media ownership has become.

A just-released study by the Pew Research Center found that half of Americans believe the new FCC regulations will have a negative impact on the country — up from just 34 percent in February. "People who are most familiar with the FCC plan have an overwhelmingly negative opinion of it," the study found. "By roughly ten-to-one (70 percent to 6 percent), those who have heard a lot about the rules change say its impact will be negative, not positive."

As if the waters weren't already roiling enough, now enters the Mitre Corporation, an engineering firm whose study, curiously released around the same time as the Pew survey, further erodes confidence in the notion that the airwaves are, in any way, shape, form or fashion, being regulated in the "public interest, convenience, and necessity," as the old saw goes — or regulated in any *logical* manner at all, other than to the exclusive benefit of a few well-connected media barons.

"MITRE has concluded that LPFM stations can be operated on third-adjacent channels with respect to existing 'Full Power' FM stations provided that relatively modest distance separations are maintained between any LPFM station and receivers tuned to the potentially affected FPFM station," the study states. It further adds: "These required separations are on the order of a few tens of meters in the best case, to slightly more than a kilometer in the worst case."

See **FCC Threatens SFLR** *page 14*

Phoenix

(A Nursery Rhyme)

by Richard Edmondson

Once we had a radio station
It was a modest little affair.
Had a front door but no back,
Yet always over the air
Came things of much interest
To delight or enthrall —
A Chomsky speech, or some hip-hop
Blowin' down the walls.

Each day there came a-troopin'
'Cross our scarred, wooden floor,
Where mike cords snaked chaotically,
One DJ, then some more.
The words of one were always
Voiced clear, sharp as a knife,
While another simply did her best
To save Mumia's life.

Monsanto plays with nature,
Modifying every gene,
But to this we had an answer
From a party colored green.
To tamper irreversibly —
It is a heinous crime.
Who makes such slim decisions
For the rest of humankind?

They prate of "mass destruction"
Pompously to no end,
As erstwhile sorrows linger
In the air yet again —
In Iraq — where so many
Lives have late been lost.
"It's worth it," Madam Albright says,
This hidden holocaust.

To everything there is a season,
All life does have its worth.
Wherefore this terrorism
Directed at the earth?
"The forest's decimation
Must end!" our voices cry —
Or softly sing a simple ode
To Julia Butterfly.

The government wants to shut us down,
The courts against us ruled,
The lawyers for the FCC in
Corruption so well-schooled.
Broadcast corporations
Blithely make the laws,
Doling out the airwaves,
Killing free speech without pause.

Yet our transmitter is as steady
As the beating of our hearts,
As strong as homeless people's
Steel-framed shopping carts.
To corporate domination
It's true we are no friend.
The NAB best stand aside,
We rise yet again!

Heard on the Radio: Voices of Homeless People

by Richard Edmondson

One of the most memorable things I ever recorded in all my work with San Francisco Liberation Radio was a conversation with a 10-year-old boy. I had taken my cheap, Radio Shack recorder out one day and gone all over San Francisco, speaking with homeless people and inviting them to tell me about their lives on the streets.

San Francisco Liberation Radio grew very much out of the Food Not Bombs movement, the station having been put on the air very purposefully in response to the arrests of Food Not Bombs members ordered by two previous mayors.

After spending some time in Golden Gate Park, I had, on this particular day, ended up finally in Civic Center Plaza, where Food Not Bombs was just at that time beginning its evening meal-serving. It was at this point that I had a remarkable conversation with the above-mentioned young boy, who told me of his dreams of one day becoming a reporter.

I did a lot of editing, condensing the tape down to a few of the most memorable and interesting sound bites; and then played it quite a bit over the air.

That was quite a long time ago, and since then I have converted it into a Real Audio file and uploaded it to my web site.

Below I've included a partial transcript of the tape, but there is nothing like hearing the actual voices themselves. Every time I listen to it I am moved anew, for it is immeasurably powerful. You can listen at http://www.libradpress.com/voices.htm

Whenever I hear some politician announcing another new cut in services to the poor (ostensibly always for poor people's own good) I think of this boy and his mom, who can also be heard on the tape. And I wonder where they are.

The boy today would be 19 or 20 years old, that is assuming he is still alive: life on the streets is not, after all, especially conducive to longevity of life-span.

Partial transcript, recorded in Civic Center Plaza, San Francisco

Boy: I've been going around Chinatown and interviewing tourists.

Richard Edmondson: *Oh have you?*

Boy: It (his tape recorder) is in the car though.

RE: *Do you like doing that?*

Boy: Yeah. I'm thinking about being a reporter when I grow up because I've watched the TV news for a long time and all the reporters are kind of like — they only ask questions like — they only go up to people in suits and stuff. They never ask regular people walking by questions.

RE: *Yeah, you never see reporters asking questions in places like this.*

Boy: Yeah. So, I was thinking I would do stories by which I would go up to people — instead of like high Congress people that live in a dome or something, you know?

RE: *Are you living on the streets yourself?*

Boy: With my parents. We're kind of homeless.

RE: *Are you living in a vehicle?*

Boy: Umm, no, a park. But we do have a vehicle and we're looking for a place up north. Lot cheaper up there for rent.

RE: *How old are you?*

Boy: Ten.

RE: *Is this your sister over here?*

Boy: Yeah.

RE: *How old is she?* (to little girl): *How old are you, honey?*

Little Girl: Five

RE: *Is this your big brother here?*

Little Girl: (no answer)

RE (speaking to boy): *What's it like living with your family in the park right now?*

Boy: Well... well, it's nice actually.

RE: *Nice? Do you go to school?*

Boy (whispering): No. Not yet. Soon.

Chalk Artist Adds Color to Berkeley Sidewalks

Police and City officials try to drive artist away even though she is no threat to anyone

Annie is an artist. She never begs, her dog is friendly, and her shopping carts are packed neatly and out of the way. But police harass her and have roust-ed Annie and her son Daniel from the secluded spot where they sleep.

by Lydia Gans

If you're on the corner of Shattuck and Kittredge by the Berkeley library you can't miss her. With two overloaded shopping carts, and an umbrella propped between them to provide shade for her dog, Annie spends most of her days there. Her 14-year-old son Daniel is with her when he's not in school or with friends or in the library on the internet, "doing kid internet stuff."

Annie doesn't just sit there waiting for people to give her food or spare change. She's busy giving her gift to others: colorful chalk drawings on the sidewalk that give other people pleasure. And when she's not drawing, she takes pride in selling the *Street Spirit*. That too, she feels, is giving back something

Anna Ballance (everyone calls her Annie) and her son have been homeless since November, when she was fired from her job for complaining about an abusive boss. She is still contending with the bureaucracy so she can collect unemployment insurance. Meanwhile, it didn't take long before she ran out of money to pay the rent.

Her nights are spent on porches or in alleyways, any place "dark and quiet," she says. Annie knows from experience that "a lot of times with friends, other homeless people, there's safety in numbers."

Annie is an artist. She draws designs and pictures from her imagination or copies them from books. Sometimes people make special requests. Her drawings are beautiful; but, sadly, they don't last long. A city worker hoses them off periodically, sometimes not for weeks, other times within a few days.

"There's no telling what the hose guy's going to do," she says. One can't help noticing that while the "hose guy" is quite efficient at washing off her drawings, he's not so good at removing the wads of chewing gum stuck all over the sidewalk.

There is plenty of walking space and sitting space on that corner. The local merchants are all friendly to her; and passers-by will stop to sit on the benches to rest and chat with her, often leaving something in her spare change box. It is totally clear that she is no threat to anyone. She never begs, her dog is friendly, and her two shopping carts, though very full of her necessary personal belongings, are packed neatly and stand out of the way of traffic.

Yet some of the folks running the City of Berkeley aren't happy about her being there. The street washings have been happening more frequently; and she gets harassed for leaning against the tree or the building, for simply taking up space, it seems. They have implied, she says, that they might be less bothered if she moved from place to place. Are they worried that people might think she belongs there?

As for her shopping carts, the City has now provided her with storage space at Shattuck Storage. However, it is a small cubicle placed high out of her reach so she has to climb up on some large boxes to access it. Even then it is hard to lift her things in and out. Nor would the custodians there allow her to bring a friend along to help. They claim that a "new policy" forbids bringing a friend.

One can't help wondering if other public storage facilities control who their clients can bring with them. One might suspect that this policy applies only to homeless people. And, of course, having a storage space doesn't solve the problem of keeping her sleeping gear, clothing and personal items which she needs every day.

Continual police harassment has also been wearing Annie down, a constant stress factor added on top of the pressure to move from the downtown corner and the difficulties of dealing with her possessions. As they do with other homeless people, the police have been rousting Annie and her son Daniel and the others from the secluded spot where they sleep. One night they were twice awakened out of a sound sleep and accused of making too much noise. She had no way of reaching COP-WATCH for help.

It's been eight months now that Annie has been on the street. She has no place to rest properly, no place to clean up. Getting and holding a job under these conditions is practically impossible. Her meager income won't provide a roof over her and her son's head.



Annie Ballance creates colorful pictures with pastel-colored chalk in downtown Berkeley. Lydia Gans photos



Annie's son Daniel was rousted by police twice during the night. Now even the noisy truck doesn't wake him up.

More and more she is feeling stressed and angry. Lately she has been subjected to verbal abuse by police officers and a member of the Mobile Crisis Unit who, she says, "completely lost it" and yelled obscenities at her.

Annie has been homeless before. Her life has alternated between periods of stability and chaos. "I've had stretches when things are going along fine," she says. "Then something happens, pulls the rug out from under me — have to start all over. Five years here, six years there have been stable. But it's hard. Something catastrophical happens to you that's no fault of your own, when all of a sudden your whole world is not (the same) any more and you have to create a new one for yourself."

In an unstable living situation, it's hard to hold any kind of demanding job. Annie taught preschool for seven years, but it was too stressful to carry on when she didn't have a stable living situation. "You have to be somewhat of a patient person to be a good teacher in the first place," she says. "And when you're worried about where you're going to live next, you can't. It's too stressful for me."

"I don't do well with change," she says. Yet she has had to contend with major changes, even with "catastrophes, like losing everything. Like the bank took over a house I was living in in San Francisco for a long time. They foreclosed on the owner, and I had to move suddenly and I was quite comfortable there. Then, different relationships that I've been in with men didn't work out. Things turn bad, you just have to get out. You have to leave suddenly, you know, and lose everything."

Annie credits her son Daniel for the idea of doing the chalk drawings, so people will see that she's "not lazy and maybe they will help more." Sometimes Daniel does a little drawing too.

Annie is proud of him. He likes history and geography. "He's very bright, very intelligent," she states. Being homeless doesn't seem to bother him. When I tell Daniel I am writing about people who are homeless, he raises his fist in a cheer, "Yay, Go Homeless People!"

His friends don't care that Daniel is homeless. He hopes to go to Berkeley high school next year because there, he says, nobody cares if you're homeless. At the junior high, though, he got teased about being poor. When he grows up, he hopes to start an independent film company. A creative bent seems to run in the family.

Born in Virginia, Annie came to California and, after living in various parts of the state, she "fell in love with Berkeley" in the 1980s. She appreciated the "open-mindedness" here, she says. Perhaps this will turn out to be a lucky place for her. She is full of creative ideas for innovative projects involving children and adults in art, theater, music, and more. Just locate a place, she says, and "lots of things could go on there. A community recreation center, respite for everyone."

Then Annie's upbeat mood fades and she talks about what is happening to her — the hypocrisy of a society which caters to the rich and lets the poor fall through the cracks. Her spirit visibly deflates. The effects of sleep deprivation, deteriorating health, and anger at the injustice of it all are taking their toll.

Some friends are working with her to try to get a foundation grant to start a nonprofit center through which she can implement some of her projects. Maybe she'll get the grant and be able to settle down here to a stable, creative life. She will certainly be the better for it — and so will the community that welcomes her.

Alarming Levels of 'Hate Speech' Against the Poor

by Terry Messman

Homeless vehicle dwellers in the wealthy city of Santa Barbara are caught in a bewildering cross current of conflicting messages coming from city officials, county officials, and the general public.

A new wave of acceptance by the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors was undermined by a treacherous undertow of repressive laws enacted by the City Council; and a torrent of hate speech was directed against the poor by the affluent citizens of this seaside resort town.

Given the high cost of housing and the calamitous loss of affordable SRO hotel rooms in Santa Barbara, dwelling in vehicles has become one of the few "housing" options remaining for poor and disabled people. Yet, Santa Barbara police are vigorously enforcing laws that drive homeless vehicle dwellers out of town. In recognition of these hardships, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to proceed with the creation of an off-street, legal park for vehicle dwellers.

Peter Marin, a longtime activist, author and founder of the Committee for Social Justice (CSJ), said he believes the supervisors took action "because they are aware of the crisis this is creating for many of the poorest of the poor." County officials are aware that the "majority of vehicle dwellers are on SSI and are, in some sense, wards of the county because they are impoverished," he said.

The proposed vehicle park could conceivably house up to 50 vehicles. Catholic Charities has agreed to manage the site. A private donor who gives a lot of support to the Committee for Social Justice is prepared to provide funding for the vehicle park, largely at the urging of CSJ.

Despite this solid progress, prospects for a legal vehicle campground ran headfirst into the rock-hard resistance of vocal opponents, almost immediately after the board vote. The single most promising site that county staff had located to situate the legal encampment was met with vehement opposition from neighbors.

"There was such resistance from people close to the site that it may prove impossible to use it," Marin said. "This presents a very big problem because this was probably the most useable site. The great fear that we have is that whenever a particular site is found, the neighbors will unite in resistance to this."

Marin said that compassion for the plight of homeless people should overrule such objections, but acknowledged that some of the complaints were reasonable, given the size of the proposed vehicle park, and the potential for visual blight and fire hazards. The CSJ has suggested a more workable approach with much smaller groups of vehicles in scattered sites.

Catholic Charities is currently administering such a program in Santa Barbara where three vehicles are located on each of five separate sites owned by churches and nonprofit agencies. That small-scale program has run successfully for more than a year, with very few problems.

Even as the Board of Supervisors works on a positive solution for the problems of unhoused vehicle dwellers, the City of Santa Barbara has been punitively enforcing two ordinances that make it illegal to live in a vehicle virtually anywhere in town. One ordinance sets a strict two-hour limit on parking a recreational vehicle (RV) anywhere in the city. The second bans all RV parking from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. on all public streets. "So, in point of fact, it makes it impossible to keep a vehicle anywhere in the city," Marin explained.

Police are now strenuously enforcing these two ordinances, and other old laws as well, with the result that many impoverished and disabled vehicle dwellers accumulate fines they cannot pay. Many homeless people are forced to leave town, and others have their vehicles confiscated. Once a vehicle is towed, it becomes prohibitively expensive to pay the towing and storage fees, then pay off all the tickets and other registration fees.



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

"People are basically saying that they don't want poor or disabled people in their community, and that the community has no responsibility towards them whatsoever. It's a despicable, quasi-fascist attitude. It amounts to a kind of ethnic cleansing, basically an economic cleansing."

How the law ruins lives

The end result can be ruinous — the shattering loss of the very last possession that kept a homeless person from landing on the streets, totally destitute.

One 55-year-old homeless man, who lives on a small SSI stipend for his mental disability, was given 11 parking tickets, and couldn't pay them. As a result, he couldn't register his vehicle, so the police took it away.

"So now he spends his time at the shelter and sleeps at night by the railroad tracks," Marin said. "And this has happened over and over. This kind of thing goes on all the time, so people lose their vehicle and lose their possessions and they're on the street with nothing. This total impoverishment is a direct result of the City's program to disenfranchise RV owners. It's a direct result of City policy which seems designed to make very poor people even poorer than they already are."

The Committee for Social Justice has helped several people get their vehicles back from towing yards. Recently, they negotiated with salvage yards where a homeless person may owe $1000, but the towing company accepts $250 from the CSJ. Attorney Glen Mowrer of the CSJ continues to defend people in court who have been ticketed under this crackdown.

But the end result is that many people lose their home on wheels or are forced out of Santa Barbara altogether. "The City has, in point of fact, broken the back of the RV community," Marin said. "We just don't know where people are. They've either left town, and we know several cases where the RVs have been confiscated."

Dangerous level of intolerance

At the same time that city officials have launched a sustained police crackdown, a dangerous new level of bigotry and hate speech has been directed at homeless people by the well-off citizens of this wealthy resort community.

The bitter, anti-homeless invective from wealthy citizens has sprouted up with new force in letters to the editor and op-eds in the *Santa Barbara News-Press*, and at City Council meetings. Marin said that the rhetoric directed against the homeless amounted to "hate speech."

"This is class warfare," he said. "It's the war of the rich against the poor. There's a large segment of the population that doesn't want to have to deal with or see the poor in their neighborhoods, or their sight, and they just want them out of town."

Some of this intolerance comes from merchants anxious to blame someone for the decline in tourist dollars that has accompanied the larger economic downturn. But much of the recent anti-homeless demagoguery comes from affluent homeowners who are not necessarily being hurt economically, but who simply object to the very presence of homeless and disabled people in "their" city.

Marin traces this emergence of intolerance to an attitude by the wealthy that if people are priced out of the expensive housing market, they must simply leave town. "There's a clear belief that there's no reason for people who can't afford to live here to stay in town," he said.

This prejudice against the very poor impacts disabled people with special severity; both physically and mentally disabled people must live on fixed SSI incomes, and often are unable to afford housing in Santa Barbara.

"Therefore, what people are basically saying is that they don't want either poor people or disabled people in their community, and that the community has no responsibility towards them whatsoever," Marin said. "It's a despicable, quasi-fascist attitude. It amounts to a kind of ethnic cleansing, basically an economic cleansing."

It is astonishing, he said, that many in Santa Barbara are unashamedly uttering these bitter denunciations of the poor in public meetings and in the pages of newspapers. Marin said that many "well-housed and well-heeled citizens" have said openly, in front of the Santa Barbara City Council, that homeless vehicle dwellers were dangers to the community "and had no right to live among us, and should basically be driven out of town."

Many apparently believe it is socially acceptable to publicly malign a poor and disabled minority with bigoted slurs and hate-filled rhetoric that would be unacceptable if directed at any other minority.

"The same things that people once said about Blacks or Jews, they now say about the homeless," Marin said. "They're dirty, they're crazy, they don't belong here, they make us nervous, they bother us, they have no rights. They certainly don't have the rights that regular citizens have, and the reason they don't have those rights is because they're poor and they disturb us. And what you get is the formulation of laws that are quasi-fascist. They're basically designed to cleanse the community of the presence of the poor."

If such public hate speech had been directed against other racial and ethnic minorities, the City Council would not have allowed that bigoted speech to go on unchallenged during their official meetings, and the *Santa Barbara News-Press* would not have printed it.

"If this was said about other minorities, these letters wouldn't have been printed in the paper," Marin said, "but because the subject was homeless people and beggars *it had suddenly become permissible to say* these horrific things. Because these were rich people talking about the poor, it was for some reason allowable to make these extravagant and exaggerated claims."

Rounding up the homeless

"The rhetoric very quickly escalated until we had serious letters in the newspaper advocating the rounding up of homeless people and their placement in encampments," Marin said. "One letter I remember in particular said, 'I think our country made a great mistake in rounding up the Japanese citizens during the Second World War, but certainly we should consider doing this to the homeless now.'"

At no economic cost whatsoever, members of the Santa Barbara City Council could use their position as public officials to call for more tolerance for an impoverished and tormented minority.

"What is disturbing more than the letters is the absolute silence of city officials about this level of rhetoric," Marin said. "They would have questioned this speech if leveled against other minorities."

Marin believes that a boycott of Santa Barbara is called for to protest the disturbing inaction of public officials to this upsurge in hate speech, along with their repressive enforcement of laws designed to drive homeless people out of town.

"I wish that *Street Spirit*, in conjunction with all other homeless papers across the country, would begin a roster of places worthy of boycotting," he said.

"I would urge anybody who reads your newspaper in the Bay Area who was planning a trip down to Santa Barbara to postpone it, and inform our local authorities that they have postponed coming to Santa Barbara because they didn't approve of the way the homeless were being treated."

Home Ownership for a Homeless Berkeley Woman

by Lydia Gans

"I've always wanted to belong to a community, and one of the ways to do that is to have a home," says Jill Dunner, a Berkeley resident who has struggled with poverty and homelessness much of her life. Now, thanks to the efforts of a lot of people putting together a combination of assistance and subsidies from Section 8, the Northern California Land Trust, and CitiBank, it looks like she might become a homeowner.

For Jill Dunner, this means more than physical security. "I have never felt rooted anywhere," she says, but owning a home "changes your whole life." She intends to "participate in the community, to be involved in making it a home, a village." She explains that it is necessary to have a home, because "one of the things that really shapes a village is the homeowners, the people that really have a stake in it. And I've always been on the outside."

If all goes as it should, Dunner will never again be on the outside. It has been a long, hard road; and, as of this writing, she still hasn't been able to take the final step of moving in. There has been one agonizing delay after another. Buying a home is complicated under any circumstances; but for people with very limited incomes, it involves many more pieces to put together the complete package.

Alvita White, the coordinator of the Berkeley Housing Authority's (BHA) Section 8 home ownership program, explains that, similar to the Section 8 voucher which is used to subsidize rent payments, HUD offers a Section 8 voucher to subsidize mortgage payments.

But a mortgage is a bank loan; so the buyer has to qualify — that is, their credit has to be in order, which is often a stumbling block for poor people. Dunner has *managed to qualify*.

Then, the down payment and a number of different fees must be paid, amounting to quite a large sum. Under the Section 8 home ownership program, the buyer has to pay a maximum of $500. There are various resources, including the federal government and a special fund administered by Citibank, which is putting the whole package together.



Jill Dunner and Lauren Buckland at the Northern California Land Trust office. Jill is signing the escrow papers for her new home. Lydia Gans photo

Other hurdles must be cleared. The buyer has to have insurance, the building has to be inspected, and so on. Because Dunner's case is the first such purchase in Berkeley, the bank, lacking people with experience in this area, seems to be moving exceedingly slowly. All in all, it is an excruciating process, guaranteed to raise even the coolest person's anxiety level.

Along with getting the potential buyer qualified and putting together the financial package, the third element in the process is finding the home that will pass rigorous inspection and is affordable. In Berkeley that's a particularly tough hurdle. Alvita White, who with Jill Dunner and others was on the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) working with the Berkeley Housing Authority to develop the home ownership program, recalls that many people insisted it would never work in Berkeley because of the high cost of housing.

"Some people were upset with me for even spearheading and pushing the program in Berkeley," White says. "They were saying 'Why don't you do it somewhere where it will work? It's a good program but it's not going to work here.' "

But White insisted that "people are being pushed out of Berkeley and having to move way out to (other) places and I don't think it's fair."

It has taken four years, but finally it looks like it can happen in Berkeley, thanks to the Northern California Land Trust. The conditions of the purchase are that Dunner will be able to buy her house, but not the land it stands on. That will forever belong to the Land Trust. And if she ever decides to sell, she cannot take a profit from it.

The purpose of the program, which is part of a National Community Land Trust Network, is explained by Ian Winters, executive director of the local group. "The whole idea is to take real estate out of the speculative market. Housing and land are basic human rights."

The Land Trust purchases a piece of land and develops it with the intention that it will always be available to people with low incomes, even when the real estate market goes up. It is set up to insure that "all the work that went into making it affordable doesn't disappear just as soon as someone decides to sell it," Winters says.

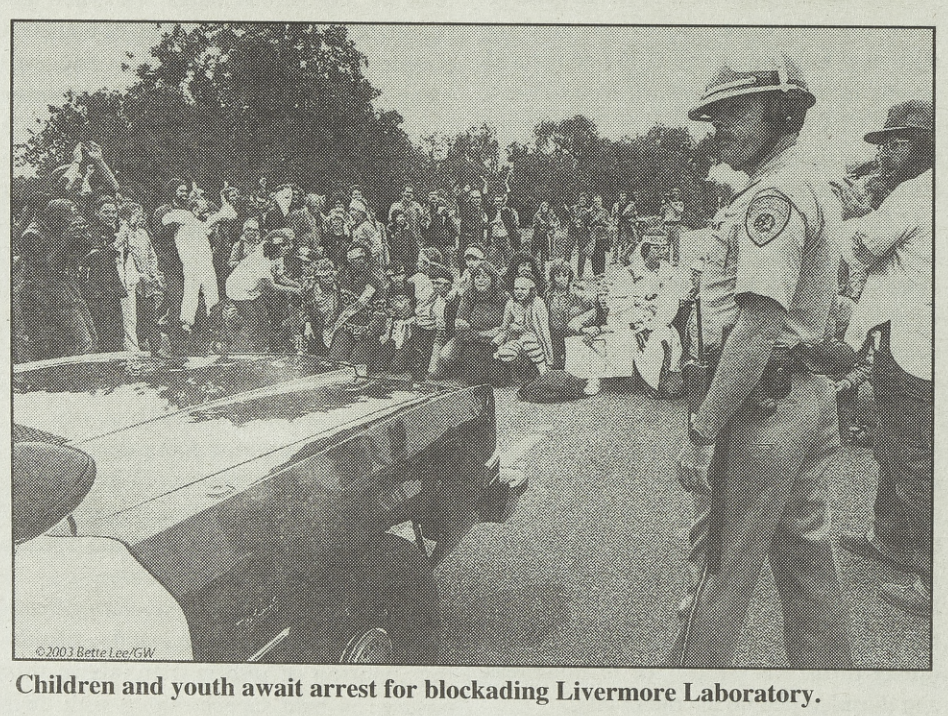
The Land Trust is set up to provide affordable housing for low-income people in general, not only those on Section 8. The fact that the process of finalizing this particular purchase has been painfully slow has caused financial hardship to the Land Trust. Meanwhile, there are a number of other potential Section 8 buyers and they have realtors searching for more affordable housing in Berkeley.

Along with her position at the Housing Authority, Alvita White is also director of the nonprofit organization B-HOPE, Berkeley Home Ownership Program for Everyone. This organization is working to put together more opportunities for home ownership. White describes the importance of B-HOPE. "We have to get out there and find ways to make it work and show people you have to have hope."

For Jill Dunner, who has been living at the Y where the residents cannot have guests staying with them, having her own home will mean roots for herself and for her grown daughter. Right now, she says, "My daughter doesn't have a home to come back to. If she came to visit me at the Y, she couldn't stay. In other words, she can't visit her Mom. I have no place for pictures. I don't have any place to have those memories for her."

Hopefully, before another long month goes by, all the paperwork will be completed and Jill will move into her new home. Surely the next one will be easier, and the next and the next after that, so that many more poor, rootless people will have the opportunity to settle into their own place in a community of their choosing.

Direct Action



Children and youth await arrest for blockading Livermore Laboratory.



LAG organizer Darla Rucker is roughly arrested at Livermore Laboratory.

Reviewed by Andrea Prichett

Direct Action captures the spirit of possibility that ignited a generation of activism, presenting the very human heart that lives in the center of activist culture.

Far from depicting superheroes, this is the story of real people whose greatest act of courage is refusing to accept things the way they are. The characters are lofty and gritty, idealistic and practical, complex and striving. Hauser has provided a work that is historical, yet uniquely relevant to all who search for a better world.

Direct Action is a delightful excursion through time, raising the heady possibility that humans could live in a world without war. Like a drink of pure, clean water, Hauser's novel will refresh those who work for social change, yet rarely see their lives or values reflected in mainstream culture.

For people who have never crossed the line, this story is especially relevant as current events compel people of conscience to examine the price they would pay for freedom.

A School for Activists

Livermore Action Group (LAG) was a school for activists. The graduates of this "school without walls" went on to influence and shape the major movements from the 1980s to the present. From the anti-apartheid, Central America, and police accountability movements to those challenging globalization and war, LAG veterans' strategies, tactics, and values have been used effectively in all these struggles.

I first encountered LAG in 1985 at an anti-apartheid sit-in, shortly after the events described in this novel. Now, every time I participate in an affinity group, go to a "spokescouncil," do a "vibes check" or hear in the news that Colin Powell will be "facilitating" a meeting, I am reminded of the courage and kindness of those LAG folks who passed on their wealth of knowledge and experience with us.

For those of us who inherited this culture of resistance, Hauser's novel is a welcome reminder of how groups like Livermore Action Group kept hope alive during the Reagan years.

Direct Action: An Historical Novel
by Luke Hauser
$19.95. Available from GroundWork.
Contact: info@directaction.org, or call: (415) 255-7623.

AFSC and Working Essentials Join Hands to Serve the Poor

by Alina Trowbridge

Like many agencies sending emergency relief overseas, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has had to deal with a sticky question: Why are you sending relief to other countries when there are so many people in need here?

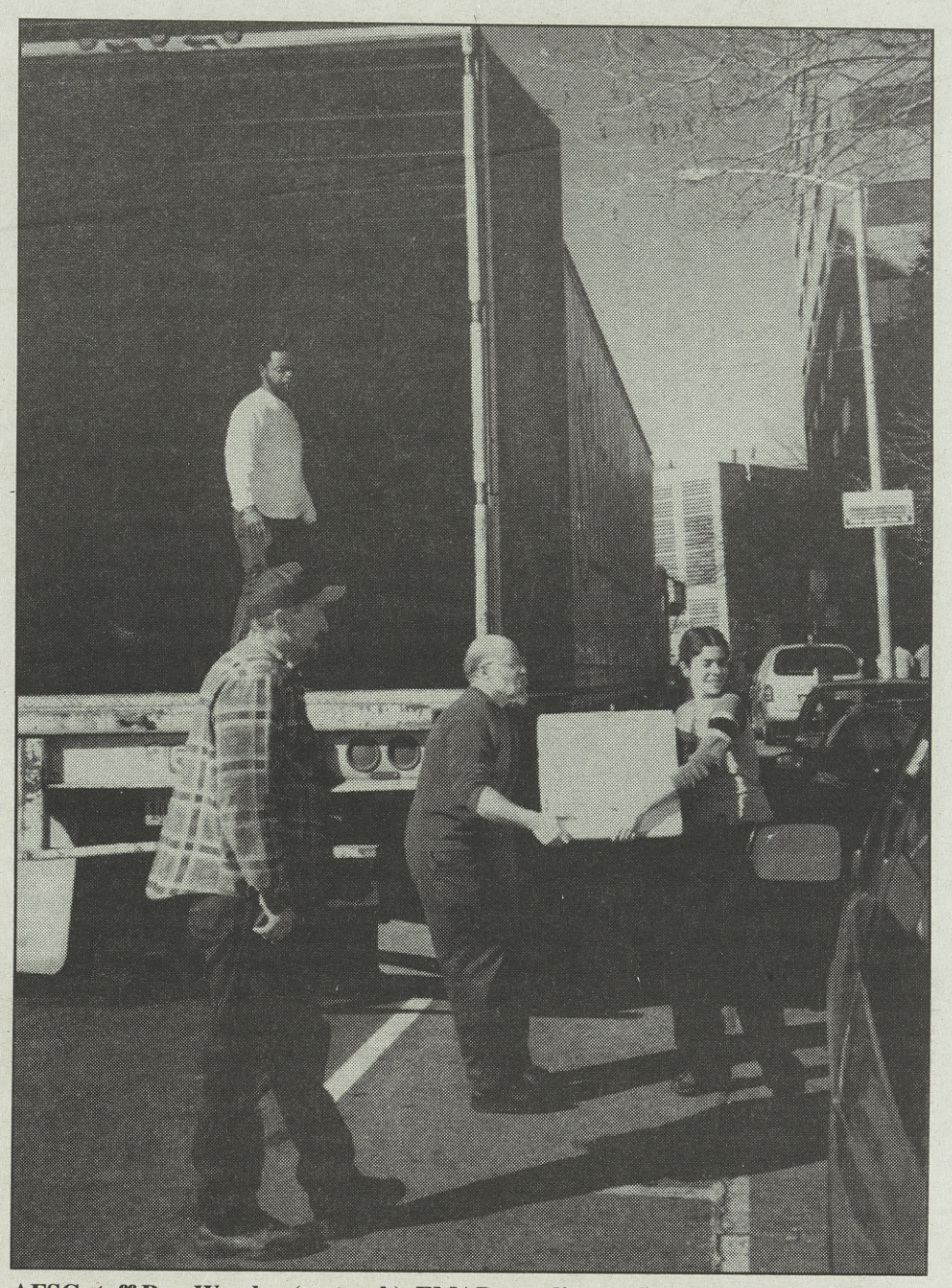
Since the bombing of Afghanistan, the AFSC has taken the opportunity to share donations that can't be shipped overseas with homeless neighbors and service providers in San Francisco: good quality clothing that's inappropriate for the climate of the recipient country, stuffed animals, children's clothes, winter jackets that are just a little too worn to survive the trip and the distribution process overseas, blankets and sleeping bags with patterns on them inappropriate for the recipient society, such as corporate logos, cartoon characters, and Christian crosses on materials destined for an Islamic country.

Now AFSC has a new opportunity to bring the relief effort home. Working Essentials, a group that collects toiletries and appointment books for agencies preparing homeless people for job interviews, was looking for a new home, and AFSC has opened its doors and its storage space to the program.

Working Essentials was born at a San Francisco Continuum of Care planning meeting in 1995, where job counselors and homeless service providers discussed their constituents' need for personal items to prepare themselves for job interviews, including soap and shampoo, razors, date books and briefcases. These items are difficult for a person on General Assistance to plan for, and service agencies don't have the budget to cover them, either. Yet, concerned individuals can easily collect them from motels on road trips and donate them to homeless people, if donating is made easy.

Sandy Weil and Scott Sanger thought of a way to make it easy. They arranged to leave collection bins at stores and businesses, and recruited volunteers to pick them up, sort them, and distribute them to service providers. The program began under the Council on Poverty and Homelessness. When the Council disbanded, Working Essentials moved to the Tides Center.

"Working Essentials is like a shared staff person doing outreach on behalf of all these organizations," says co-founder Sandy Weil. "It's a concrete and simple system to get items from people and get them to everyone. I attend graduations at Episcopal Community Services and the Haight Ashbury Food Program, and it's nice to see the folks who are job ready with help from these items."



AFSC staff Ron Wooden (on truck), EMAP coordinator Stephen McNeil, and volunteers load a truck for shipment to Afghanistan. Alina Trowbridge photo

At the same, AFSC was doing something similar to create individual hygiene kits for people overseas suffering from the effects of hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes or displaced by war or ethnic conflict. The contents were different, according to the need in each country, but the principle was the same: a few simple items that everyone needs and that are very easy to collect, packaged conveniently for individual use.

While AFSC published lists of the items to be packed in a 12-inch ziplock plastic bag for the next hygiene, school, or children's art kit, Working Essentials hung ziplock bags on people's doorknobs with information about the program and the nearest drop-off site. AFSC volunteers checked kits to see that the contents were correct, packed them into cartons, and shipped them to Honduras, Colombia, Haiti, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Working Essentials volunteers picked up donation bins, sorted the contents, and made deliveries to San Francisco service providers.

Over the years, Working Essentials grew to serve San Francisco agencies that, in turn, serve nearly 5,000 low-income and homeless people annually. They expanded to receive corporate donations, and hired staff to coordinate volunteers, while the unpaid board continued to write grants, solicit donations, and expand services.

Then the economy dived downward, and funding began to dry up. Being an independent organization didn't seem viable anymore. Working Essentials went looking for a new home.

According to Sandy Weil, they were looking for an agency that addresses poverty, is good at finding people who need help, and enjoys strong community support and broad respect. They spoke with churches and nonprofits. They met with ten of the agencies they serve. But other organizations were in the same situation. No one had the staff, and few had even the limited storage space required.

Agencies agreed to pick up their items, instead of having them delivered by Working Essentials. They agreed to donate two hours a month staff time and to recruit volunteers for the program. But no one could take on the program.

Finally, Working Essentials board member Elba Montes Donnelly suggested AFSC. The AFSC's Emergency and Material Assistance Program (EMAP) felt it was a good fit, and thanks to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), they had some storage available.

"It's great that we can involve volunteers and neighborhood businesses in responding to homeless and poor people," said Stephen McNeil, EMAP coordinator. "We try to engage people in service that is practical and effective, and Working Essentials has established a seven-year track record of involving people in doable projects. Most importantly, we can involve young people in their own neighborhoods, distributing door hangers, and other concrete tasks."

Working Essentials' board is happy, too. The American Friends Service Committee *suits their priorities. "It's like a no glitz, no* glamour place," said Weil. "You guys just do your work, no fancy office spaces, just very practical, down-to-earth folks. And the energy when you walk into your place, it's just good energy."

WORKING ESSENTIALS

Donate toiletries to Working Essentials at a site in San Francisco or at AFSC, 65 Ninth Street (between Mission and Market), 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. Call (415) 565-0201, ext. 12, or e-mail smcneil@afsc.org for a flyer with details.

Where to Eat When You're on the Street

Congregation Beth El Dining Room in Berkeley

by Maureen Hartmann

The Congregation Beth El dining room has been serving hungry people for about 15 years, according to Ruth Spear, one of the directors. It started as a temporary service, because the founders thought there was only a short-term need. Now some of the guests have been coming for ten years and longer.

Ellie Goldstein-Ericson, who gives out tickets at the gate, says that one 95-year-old man has been coming for years, and is now too old and feeble to come. She asks the guests to let her know if things get better in their lives, and they no longer need the free meal, so the volunteers won't worry that something bad has happened to them.

The dinner operation is known among the guests as the "Chicken Shack," because it serves chicken every third Sunday of the month. Service begins at 3 or 3:30 p.m. with ice tea and a dessert from Tootsweet Bakery, says Spear. Tickets are passed out from 3:30 to 5:15 p.m. Dinner starts at 5:15 p.m. Generally, said Spear, they begin to oven roast the chicken about noon. Only one time, when another group was using the kitchen, did they have to buy barbecued chicken from Albertson's.

About a third of the volunteers are from the congregation. A number of Quakers have volunteered from time to time, and others have come along with J. C. Orton from Night on the Streets Catholic Worker. One time Night on the Streets brought the complete meal; another time they brought the lemonade.

Both times I visited Beth El, we waited to hear our ticket numbers called, then went into a room where there were two food-laden tables, to shorten the serving lines. I was given an extra tortilla because I told servers that I am a vegetarian. On the tortillas were served hefty portions of rice, barbecue sauce, soft fried beans, hummus, and golden shredded cheese.

Coleslaw was served, with peas and purple and green cabbage strips, and another salad was offered, with strips of carrot and peanut halves and dressed with good quality mayonnaise. The desserts included choices of apricot-filled and berry-filled shortbread cookies and chocolate brownies. There was also a beverage table with tangy, orange fruit punch, served in pastel party paper cups.

We carried our plates to about eight inviting, dark wooden, round tables on the lawn outside in the courtyard. The appetizing entrées were supplemented with seconds on punch and a choice of milk, and platters of bran muffins, cranberry muffin cinnamon cake, and Power Bars brought to the tables by volunteers.

The first time I was there, I interviewed a guest, Maria Nadalini (nicknamed "Zoe"). She rated the food and service as "very good," and the atmosphere and décor as "wonderful." Her favorite foods are the chicken, rice and beans. A male guest sitting nearby volunteered, "Sometimes they have a great salad… with artichokes, tomatoes, and asparagus."

Nadalini said she comes every month. She has been coming for 14 months — the time she has been homeless. She graduated from an art institute before that. She said of the meaning the dinner has in her life, "It's good to end the wait full. Not only good food (is served), but I see all my friends who are also homeless." The dinner has its "social" aspect.

The second time I dined there, I chose to try the chicken. The skin was crispy and it was tender and tasty on the inside. Altogether, the dinners there were a pleasant and warm experience.

I interviewed a male guest who chose to be called "Rufus Groundleaves." He said the food and the service were "excellent, great… most nutritious." He enjoyed eating outside, and particularly likes the salad. He has been coming once a month for ten years, a term of homelessness that he calls his "sentence." He said the dinner means to him a "nutritious buzz."

S.F. Shower Project Is Saved from NIMBY Foes

Dave has a job as a painter, but he can't afford the high rents in the city. He lives out of his work van. Without the Shower Project, he'd never be able to clean up and be hired. "If I didn't shower, who would hire me to paint?" he asks.

by Tricia Ward, *POOR Magazine*

Christopher's laughter and shrill yelps of joy echoed down the long hallway in my mother's house. As he gleefully ran away from the porcelain confines of the bathtub, leaving wet footprints and a trail of suds on the floor behind him, I sighed. What should have been a simple act of giving my three-year-old nephew a bath had turned into a most complicated project.

I picked up the tiny plastic boats and purple submarine that had been launched unceremoniously out of the tub, popped the cap back on the sweet-smelling baby shampoo that promised "no more tears," grabbed a fluffy towel from the towel rack and went to find my young charge.

There are no nautical bath toys or tear-free baby shampoo in the bathrooms at Mission High School where The Shower Project, run by the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), takes place every weekend. Walking down the dim corridor underneath the high school that leads to the gymnasium where the showers are, I'm struck by the realization that a simple concept could have such a huge impact.

Some of the clients of the project are *homeless, some have jobs, some live in* residential hotels; but none of them have ready access to a shower on a regular basis. In the shower room at Mission High School, you won't find scented bath gels, conditioner that gives fine hair unbelievable volume and control, or stacks of brightly colored, plush, sheet-sized bath towels like the kind that fill the linen closet at my mother's house.

What you will find, however, is a place where for a few hours each weekend, men and women who don't have the luxury of being able to take a shower in their own private bathroom can come, with no questions asked, and get themselves clean.



A homeless man in San Francisco rummages for food in a garbage bin at a drugstore. Imagine the difficulty of keeping clean while homeless. Lydia Gans photo

I don't use the word "luxury" lightly. Until I visited the Shower Project one Saturday afternoon, I didn't realize what an extravagance Christopher's bath or even my own daily shower is. The facilities at the school are nothing like the bathroom where my nephew holds court in my mother's house. The lighting is harsh, the tile is ugly, there is no soft bath rug to step on so your feet don't get cold after *you bathe; but the showers work, they are* functional, and they allow people to be clean, at least one day a week.

As they wait to shower, clients sit, mainly silent, along a row of fold-up chairs that line the hallway, clutching their borrowed towels and coffee cups. Everyone is patiently waiting their turn. After showering, most don't hang around. Clothes are hurriedly put on, goodbyes are said to acquaintances, thanks are given to the volunteers, and the men and women leave.

Most probably don't feel welcome to linger. The area outside the school is an enclave of yuppie-ness in an otherwise rough Mission neighborhood. It's bordered by cafés and coffee shops and the picturesque Dolores Park, which on this bright afternoon is filled with children, tennis players and sunbathers. Recently there was opposition from the surrounding community to the Shower Project. Various neighborhood groups had been working to rid the area of drug dealers; and they complained of littering and loitering that the Shower Project supposedly encouraged.

I asked L.S. Wilson of the Coalition on Homelessness why getting a shower is important to houseless folks. He said, "Being clean is an exit to homelessness."

I think about this statement and the opposition to the project as I speak to a young man named Dave who frequently comes to the shower project. "If I didn't shower, who would hire me to paint?" Dave posed that question after he had just showered; with his dark hair combed back slick against his head, he looked like he should be sitting at a table among the families that were enjoying their weekend brunch at the café across the street.

Although Dave has a job as a painter, he can't afford the high rents in the city and lives out of his work van. He's understanding of the neighbors' apprehensiveness in having a group of strangers in their neighborhood; but without this project, he'd never be able to clean himself up and be hired to paint. If he didn't paint, he wouldn't be able to afford his van and would be completely on the streets. I wonder if the neighbors who object to the project would like it better if they had to step over him sleeping on their doorstep every morning?

Cassandra, a project volunteer, tells me what the MCC did to address the community complaints. A private security guard was hired to keep clients from wandering over to the park or lining up outside the school in view of the neighborhood residents while waiting their turn to shower. A list of strict rules for clients written in both English and Spanish is posted on the double doors that lead to the showers.

Clients who break any of the rules, such as using profanity or fighting with other clients, run the risk of not being able to take part in the program. The Saturday I was there, volunteers and clients were patrolling the area outside the school building in search of litter and wayward debris, being careful to keep the place spic and span, probably cleaner than it usually is on an afternoon when school lets out.

The volunteers and clients take this very seriously; the project was in danger of being shut down until it recently won a small victory. Thanks to the lobbying efforts of the MCC, the Coalition On Homelessness and other groups, the project was able to renew its permit for at least one more year. Cassandra summarizes all of this matter-of-factly to me, without a hint of bitterness at the struggle the project has faced. She simply seems relieved that, for now, the project will continue.

Back at my mother's house, I was able to score my own victory as I corralled my protesting nephew and plunked him back into the bubble-filled tub. As I finished the task of cleaning the indignant, squirming three-year-old, who would much rather remain dirty than waste precious playtime in the bath, I reflected on the fact that he's too young to even have any concept of what a privilege a bath can be.

Tricia Ward is a POOR Magazine Poverty Studies Intern.

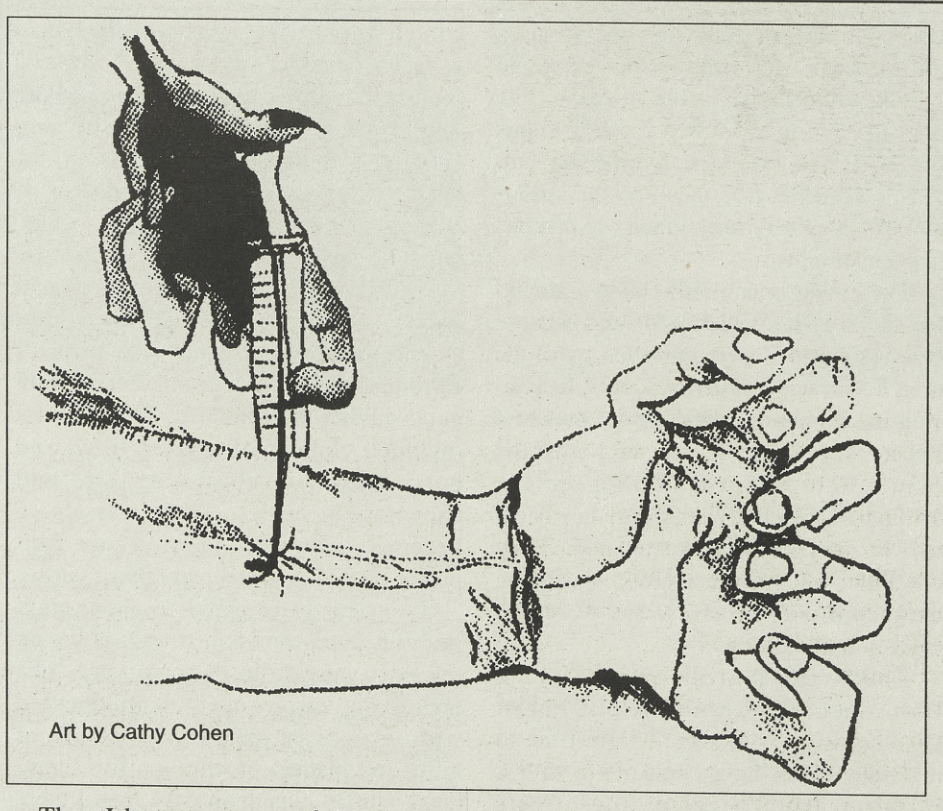
Five Heroin Addicts, The Dog, And Me

by Joy Bright McCorkle

Tiny shadows flickered from the votive candles. Two groups of men crowded around the flames. An old bearded man lay on a warming piece of cardboard, the 40 ounce bottle of Colt 45 clutched tightly in his smooth hands, sporting not one callus.

Sans cardboard, I lay on the smooth flat rocks; the masonry work done well by the Army Corps of Engineers. The hushed speech of my neighbors was indistinguishable to my ears.

No friendship or inclusion forthcoming, I lay alone, frightened and awake. My mind was drawn to the smell of vegetation rotting on the banks of the river. I lay surrounded by cement, rocks, sand and thistles. Silhouettes dancing on the cement walls of my refuge reminded me of better times long gone when I, as a child, made hand shadows on kinder, gentler walls.



Art by Cathy Cohen

Then I became aware of the roaring whish of wind rushing through the cold, damp tunnel of concrete. To comfort myself, I put my arms around my giant brown dog, thanking God for his gentle protection. My breathing mirrored the timing of quick, shallow canine breaths. I embraced the big dog's neck and chest passionately, feeling the safety and refuge that only an old lover can give.

No one spoke. Infrequently, a grunt or word could be heard over the screams of the cold roaring wind. I knew better than to look or stare at the men alone now in their chemical euphoria.

My hips screamed in agony on the unforgiving rocks and I fitfully fell asleep. My eyes flew open at dawn, focusing on the gorgeous art work on the walls. I was looking at the brilliant colors and intricate patterns seen by very few, recognizable gang colors and slogans indecipherable to my mind.

I looked around. I was alone, except for the dog. No signs of any humans were left to indict. No garbage, no sleeping bags — even the candles were gone. Was it a dream? No, I knew that when the darkness again fell on the river, the men would creep back, one at a time, to cook their chiva in dirty spoons over tiny votive candles and attempt to find an inviting vein by the dim flickering light.

Into their veins would go the golden fluid — no longer to get high, just to get well so they could sleep through one more night.

Let Freedom Ring?

Do you really still have First Amendment rights and will the courts uphold them? Can you peacefully demonstrate without the fear of being beaten by police even though you are unarmed?

by Roxanne Acquistapace

On July 4th I woke up in military-occupied Santa Cruz. I innocently made myself a cup of coffee and walked down to Twin Lakes Beach before 8 a.m. Just sipping and cruising and enjoying the crisp, fresh air, I thought I would visit the beach before the hordes of tourists and locals descended on it. I was in for a big surprise!

As I came into view of the beach, I saw that it was blocked off as far as I could see by hideous, day-glo orange, plastic fencing. There were rangers and harbor employees everywhere blocking off free access. There were only a few points where the public could enter after submitting to a search. Although I asked, those in charge seemed unclear as to whether alcohol, drugs, fireworks, sharp objects, or terrorist bombs were the reason for the search. They did not want to answer my questions.

I was very down and drove to work thinking that just having fun was not possible anymore in the relaxed ways I had known in the past. Uniformed police with guns and batons swinging from their belts patrol the main beach all summer long, rifling in coolers and watching everyone. Their shadows block your sun ominously as they pass. Even the lifeguards are armed.

The public is constantly watched in the downtown area by city employees euphemistically called "downtown hosts," who really operate as cop wannabes. The police are there all day in full force to roust out those who rest on benches too long or sit on the cement planters. Only those who look like they have a gold Master Card are spared.

There are those who have a stake in making us fear each other. It is job security disguised as being for our own good, for our safety. I passed a church billboard that had the words in all capital letters: "LET FREEDOM RING." I maintain that it should have said: "LET WHAT LITTLE IS LEFT OF YOUR FREEDOM RING."

These are my questions to all those who think everything is still so great.

Can you sleep out under the stars anywhere if you are not bothering anyone, just because the night is beautiful, or because you have nowhere else to sleep?

Can you speak your mind at public City Council meetings or will you be hauled out, even arrested, by police if what you say irritates public officials? Do you really still have First Amendment rights, and will the courts uphold them? Can you peacefully demonstrate without the fear of being beaten by police even though you are unarmed?

Can you draw on a public sidewalk with the abandonment of a child in washable chalk or blow bubbles for the sheer joy of it in your downtown area? Are there people in jail for this?

Can you really homeschool your children without a degree of fear? Can you leave your children unvaccinated without it being used against you by Child Protective Services in court as proof of medical neglect, even though it is not against the law? Are you really innocent until proven guilty?

Can your children be removed from school by a social worker without the mandatory court order and without your knowledge if your child says something that may be misinterpreted by a teacher (mandated reporter)? Can you be kept from seeing your children more than an hour a week for months to years until the misunderstanding is straightened out (usually only done by a high-priced lawyer)?

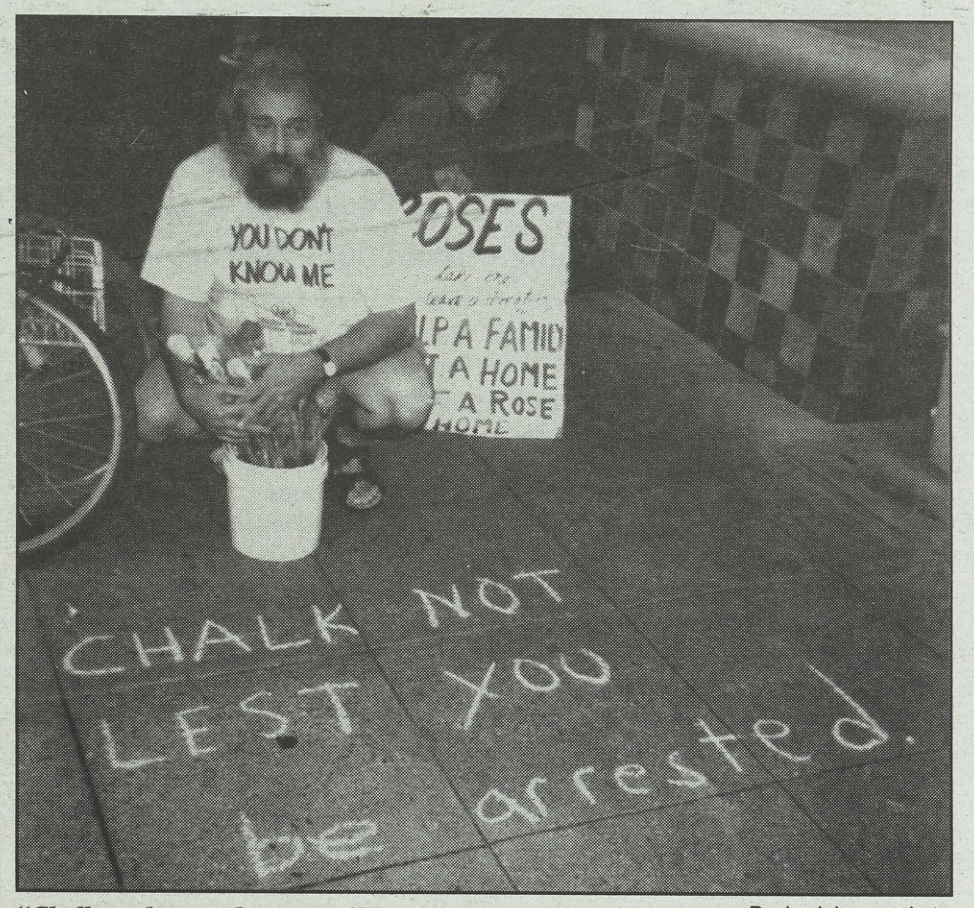
Can you park in front of your own house without being forced to buy a permit for space that was once free and paid for by your property taxes? Can you leave your car downtown overnight if you've had one too many drinks and decide to take a cab home?

Can you have beach fires on a starry summer night, or is that simple pleasure soon on its way out? Can you get four years in prison for beating a child to death, but 22 years for setting three new SUVs on fire with no loss of life?

Some people will smugly think to themselves, "I don't want to do any of those things, so what do I care?" But more and more people have become uneasy with the passage of the Patriot Act and the advent of Homeland Security. Every time we allow rights to be taken away from certain segments of society, we are letting them be stolen from ourselves.

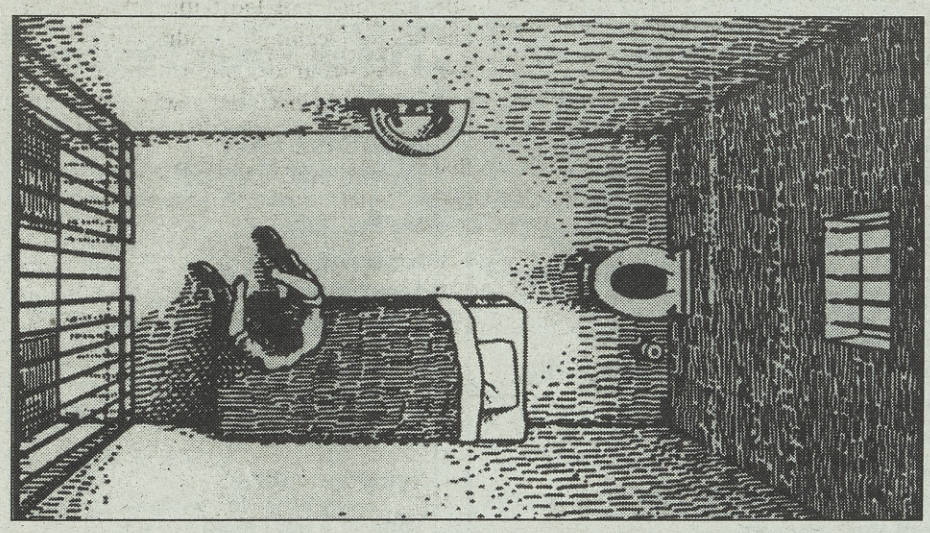
It has become increasingly clear that all and sundry may be held on a whim and a rumor without benefit of counsel or knowledge of family. You can just disappear! Like the "disappeared ones" in communist, fascist, and dictator-run countries.

Just like in America. *Let freedom ring*?



"Chalk not lest you be arrested." **Robert Norse and Randy Sue Winchell in downtown Santa Cruz. Activists have been arrested for writing in chalk on sidewalks. and hassled by the police for giving flowers for donations.** Becky Johnson photo

Friends Outside Helps Prisoners, Families



by Dorothy Herzberg

In Martinez, a remarkable organization called Friends Outside works with families of prisoners. Their contacts come from prisoners in the three facilities in Richmond and Martinez. Three full-time personnel work inside the jails directly with prisoners. When a prisoner asks that their families be contacted, the work of Friends Outside begins.

Friends Outside operates a Clothing Closet to provide emergency clothes in all sizes, and also offers emergency food staples for the families. Guidance and support groups try not to duplicate services, instead referring people to existing services such as Shelter Inc., the Homeless Hot Line, and Stand Against Domestic Violence. Friends Outside is developing a Back to School program which provides backpacks of school supplies for school-age children. Teenagers may be given money, but have to turn in receipts, so that they can show they have not wasted it.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley (UUCB) has for three years helped with collecting greeting cards which are given to prisoners in all three facilities — 400 each month. The UUCB also helps decorate Christmas stockings the women at the Pinole facility make for their children and grandchildren every Christmas. Last December, about 25 prisoners made 86 stockings. UUCB also helps with the Children's Christmas party where children pick out gifts for their caregivers and volunteers wrap them. Hundreds of gifts are donated, and volunteers usually wrap about 150 in four hours. It makes for a wonderful day.

Friends Outside has been working in Martinez since 1969. Mary Ann Van Buren, Director of Friends Outside, can be reached at (925) 228-0644.

Dorothy Herzberg is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley.

The Girl

by Marsha Campbell



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

I was carrying a bag of groceries in my arms when I saw her standing by an American chain-link fence enclosing a paper-strewn lot on the corner of 15th and Valencia, a thin, dark-haired girl about 10 or 12 years old in a modest dress.

I immediately thought she must be a child prostitute. She remained standing, looking around at the passing cars as I stared at her for several minutes. Finally, I turned and asked her name.

"What's your name?" No answer. "Come on, what's your name? What are you doing here?"

After a pause, she answered, "Lily. I'm waiting for my mother to come out of work."

I looked around. There was a dusky tin building across the street. The door was partly open so a little light came out. "You're waiting for your mother?"

Her slightly dark high cheekbone twitched a little and her twisting fingers broke a long middle nail.

I went and stood across the street while she put on her scarf. It was getting dark and chilly. A medium-sized man in a checkered coat came out of the shadows up to her, but she just shook her head in my direction as if I were her mother. He stared for a minute and then walked briskly away as if the wind had come up to rebuke him.

I remained on the corner about 20 minutes after that, watching her. I crossed over to her again. "Do you live around here, Lily?"

The girl said nothing. Suddenly the door across the street closed and the street lights came on. "Look lady, would you please go away?" she begged.

I stood silently, not knowing what to do. I didn't like the neighborhood, for her or for me.

"Please, lady."

I turned and walked toward 16th and Mission. Perhaps I would get on BART and ride toward Montgomery. The last time I turned to look at her, she was gone.

Noble Hobos

It's 2003, yet noble hobos live in a Depression-era time frame. Their identity, fancy-free and footloose, is akin to an ideology. They do their thing without bothering anyone else.

by George Wynn

They inspire nothing but disgust. You hear the merchants, whose territory they invade, curse them: "They have no will power. They'll never change." You see them with their shopping carts and sleeping blankets in the doorways of antique furniture stores and art supply stores, or any storefront doorway not barricaded for the night.

They set up camp neatly with a minimum of fuss and sweep up after they depart into the hustle and bustle of the urban dawn. They do not speak unless spoken to. They have no friends. They prefer to travel and wander alone.

They have never been in a shelter or soup kitchen. They do not panhandle. They will receive money and food if you offer it. They live off lots of casual labor and are doggedly aggressive in collecting cans and bottles for the recycling center. They regularly donate blood. And when they're in snow country, they'll shovel snow at a moment's notice.

They are totally oblivious to the fact that they inspire nothing but disgust. They live in a world of their own. These gruff men of the Baby Boom generation ghost walk from one city to another with their own particular conservative street ethic: rarely do they do drugs. They'll have a drink if it's available, but not to excess. They put a high value on sleep as a source of energy for day-to-day survival.

They tend to be meditative and loners. They live for tomorrow and the highway.

The merchants may be right — they may never change. But the merchants are dead wrong in assessing their will power. These are strong-willed men who can adapt to the harshest of circumstances.

Some of them have survived being stranded in the throes of storms on the Trans-Canadian Highway in the heart of winter. Others have faced the deadly perils of Kansas cyclones or hurled themselves into ditches in the wake of Nebraska tornadoes.

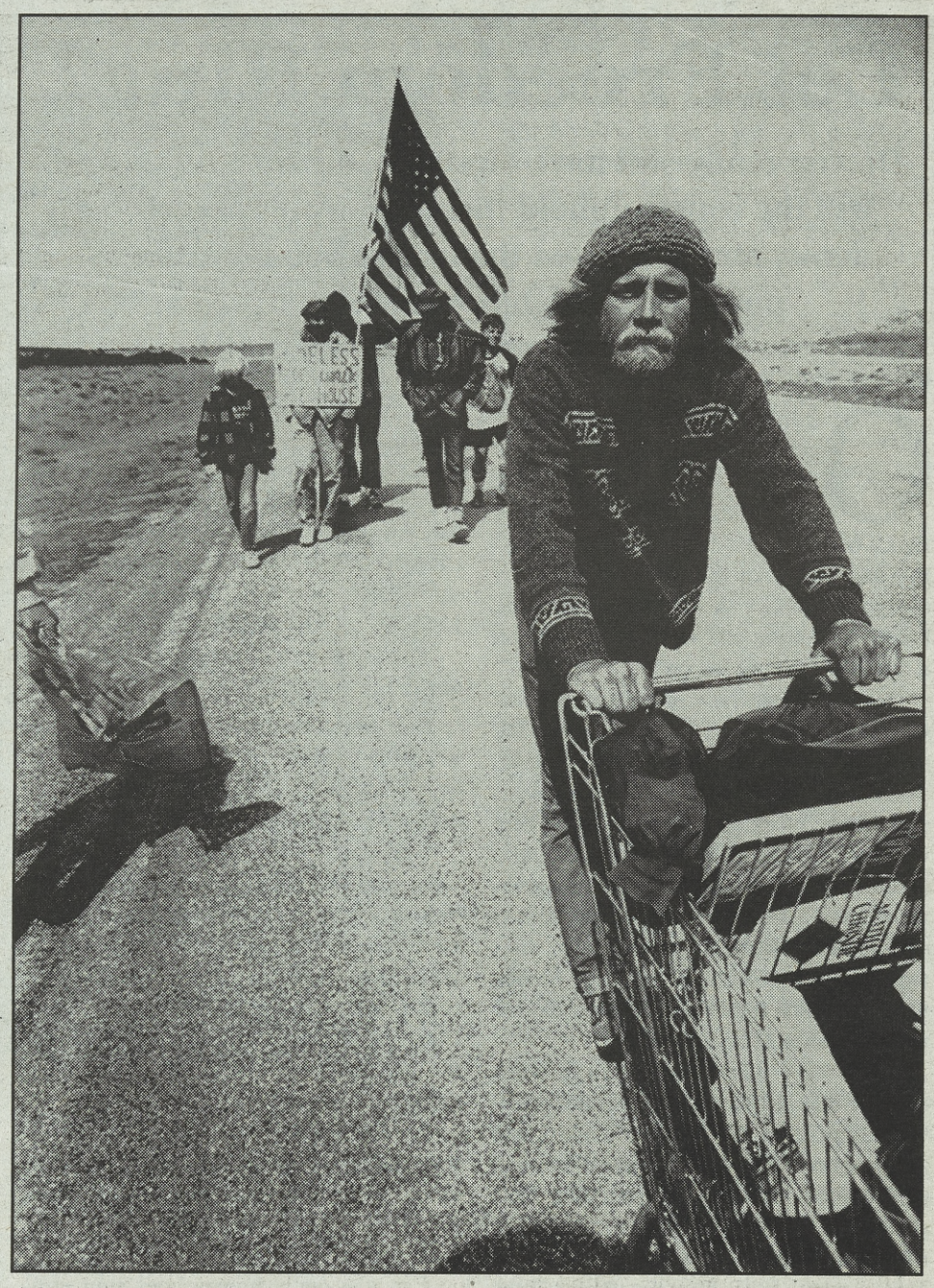
These are self-disciplined men in their own peculiar way, marching to the beat of their own drummer in the only lifestyle they are comfortable with leading.

I've split a thick sandwich with them in many a big city and poured strong black coffee into their big mugs. They're strong men, not big on conversation; but for the price of a meal, they may tell their story. It boils down to poverty and self-reliance and the freedom to live or die on Main Street U.S.A.

Recently, I asked a former Kentucky coal miner, "How long you been homeless?" Big-eyed, he corrected, "You mean, how long I've been a hobo." After a sincere apology, I asked him what he thought of the government. "I kinda like Woody Guthrie," was his response. It's 2003, but he and his fellow noble hobos live in a Depression-era time frame. Their identity, fancy-free and footloose, is akin to an ideology. Alibis, complaining or whining are taboo in their earthy and gritty belief system.

Up in Northern California, over ham and eggs and home fries, Gary, an Idaho country doctor who lost his family and practice after falling victim to a malpractice case, declared, "I don't care for government assistance. I can take care of myself. These young hobos keep me young. Sometimes, out in the woods, I'll bandage minor wounds — they don't worry about their bodies. Hypochondria is not part of their make-up. Thanks for breakfast."

Les, a wiry Texan, drives four shopping carts to the recycling mecca, his neck and forearms straining like fish fighting off the rod. "Nobody owes me nothing," he says between sips from a 7-11 cup of Coca-Cola. "Hell, it's great exercise. I used to set up for carnivals. Man, that coke did the trick. Thanks, partner."



A long march from Santa Barbara across the highways of America. Eve Fowler photo

Some noble hobos are patriotic and fly Old Glory from their shopping carts; while others paint cardboard peace signs all over their carts. Some keep detailed journals; others are illiterate, but even they write a poem or two in their head.

Most noble hobos possess an internal integrity. They do their thing without bothering anyone else. This could serve as an unwritten code if they knew each other; except, the irony is, they do not. In their private and authentic existential way of being themselves, they are the new rugged individualists of the underclass.

May God bless them — for few others have!

Visit to a Young Writer

by George Wynn

Labor Day i made a visit
to a young writer
of our downtown workshop

the clinically depressed man
in the SRO Tenderloin hotel
explained to me as we sat
on a tattered couch
in the lobby
that he lamented the closing
of his mental health clinic
but if he had to choose between
therapy and a close friend at hand
he would prefer good company —
a kind woman best

he gazed into my eyes,
"therapy is like a distant
friend — not close to the demands
of day-to-day mini-crisis
words intellectualize and instruct
but do not offer warm hands"

he thanked me for the book of poems
by william carlos williams
"wasn't he a doctor," he said
as i was leaving
"yes," i said, "and a darn good poet"
"of course," he said, "the doctor
who made house calls
in tenement slum buildings,
i believe we would
have liked each other"

"i believe you're right," i said
as i shook his sweaty hand
before he began to cry
"i'm so alone."

Back to the Street

by George Wynn

The City of Shame is closing
down the Self Help Center
on Turk Street
the workers care for
the people in the Tenderloin
they call them
by their first name
where will the workers
— once homeless — go?
where will their
client-friends go?

the city workmen
on their sweeping machines
zigzagging the street
—do they care about the Tenderloin?
—would they die for the Tenderloin?
the men in blue racing
through the Tenderloin
on a bust
—do they care about you
in the Tenderloin?
—would they kill for the Tenderloin?

bureaucratic gamesters
hone their knives
and cut Tenderloin throats
damn shame
they put all the blame
on the deficit
but we'll never
forget the politicos
who took a walk
down cop-out alley

One City's Shame

by George Wynn

The City seems to be
denying everything
while da mayor speaks
in tongues under the lights
and the supervisors receive pay raises
they stick it
to homeless folks without rights
they stick it to them between the ribs
and more and more
homeless folks get buried
their only faults
they can't get a break
and their poverty

Media Hog

by George Wynn

why must Tony Hall go off on
one of his sprees of scapegoating
the just of the streets as easily
as a child leaning his abc's?
the gall of Tony Hall who says
homeless people colonize the city
yes they do pee on the same streets
where Supervisor Tony Hall hangs
his heart from the nearest tree
Mister Hall, have the underfed
not bled enough? If you truly cared for
their well-being you would not be remiss
and certainly understand this
no, Tony Hall does not care
for homeless folk at all
he has become a media hog
with ideas as dim as san francisco fog
who needs him

Powell Street Vignette

by George Wynn

cable cars screech
turn on Powell Street

the bag lady
feeds pigeons
french bread crumbs
pigeons coo thank you

"vat time it is"
a borscht inflected voice
demands of her

"quarter to three"

wink of a bald head
"plump lady i think…
pardon my speech
you so free
not like me
i live in coy america
here tolstoy no longer speak to me
please plump lady
take big Mac"

she coos thank you

he taps her back
"i understand your situation
everyone say 'fuck you Jack'
same thing with me
when complain america
and war
patriots say 'ivan
what for— go back Russia'
i understand your situation
good bye"

she blows him a kiss
he rubs his eyes
and returns her kiss

Oakland City Council Attacks Low-Income Renters

from page three

renters in those units are not protected by the rent cap laws, presently set at 3.6% annually, and have not used the Rent Adjustment Program to fight rent hikes.

If the new proposed amendment passes, these 19,000 rental units will be charged the annual $24.00 fee even though the tenants are still being deprived of the protection of the rent cap laws. This scheme will raise $465,000 in revenues for Oakland after they grab the $24.00 per 19,000 rental units. Making matters worse for other low-income renters, Section 8 tenants will also be forced to pay into this new scheme even though they are also exempt from Oakland's rent cap laws!

This was all pushed through so fast that tenants were barely aware of it. Adam Gold of Just Cause, and Eddie Ytuarte and James Vann of the Oakland Tenants Union were available to speak out against it, along with City Councilmembers Nadel, Quan and Brunner.

John Holmgren of the Oakland Association of Realtors, who is helping to push this deal through the City Council along with Steve Edrington of RHANAC, spoke in favor of the passage of the ordinance and declaration. Holmgren had been one of only two people to support the Dick Spees' Taskforce Proposals that abolished the 3 percent rent cap two years back; despite the hundreds of people opposed to that earlier measure, the council vote went Holmgren's way. Many questioned whether the fix was in no matter what they said to save the rent cap; but they went ahead and tried their best regardless.

Oakland tenants are outraged by these latest assaults on rent control by a hostile City Council that continues to disrespect the voters and renters who fought so hard to bring about a system of fairness in the existing rental housing laws with the passage of the voter initiative Measure EE.

The council vote on July 15 did the following to screw the renters. First, it partially guts Measure EE and circumvents the will of the people who voted to pass the Just Cause measure; because when rent control is eliminated, landlords may evict by raising the rents above the renter's ability to pay. No point in having Measure EE if the landlords can evict just by raising the rents.

In essence, the scheme promotes displacement of tenants by unscrupulous landlords who want to raise rents as high as they possibly can. It's a scheme being pushed forward by the real estate industry along with their counterparts at the Rental Housing Association, who passed it along to their stooges in the City Council to vote on to make it all nice and legal.

The new ordinance will exempt from rent control all properties containing three rental units or less after the landlord moves in for a one-year period. The staff report reveals that, at a minimum, there are 3,000 units in buildings with three rental units or less in Oakland; but Oaklanders know that thousands of other rental units in the market have never been noticed by city officials or planners. Once exempt from Oakland's rent cap laws, these unknown rental units probably will never be discovered by the Rent Adjustment Program.

Until now, these units have been covered by Oakland's rent control laws since 1981, even if the landlords did move in. If the new proposed ordinance comes to pass, it could result in a loss of 5 percent of the existing $24.00 per unit rental fee income (a $72,000 loss) needed to run the Rent Adjustment Program. Furthermore, it allows landlords owning 33 percent of the property to move in and raise the rents as much as they want; while at the same time, the tenants would lose all the protections offered by Measure EE. This two-pronged attack is meant to make the renters totally defenseless as the landlords rob their bank accounts.

Oakland's rent cap at present is 3.6 percent. Landlords are also allowed to apply for capital improvement rent increases when necessary to cover expenses; those increases can be as high as a 22 percent rent hike at all of the units in the affected property.

Housing activists claim that this is more than enough to provide a fair return on a landlord's investment in a property, and that further profits above that are nothing more than an exhibition of pure greed and extortion on the landlord's part.

The following declaration proposed by the Oakland City Council on July 15 has outraged the tenants of Oakland. It says:

"Whereas, the City Council believes that the relationship between landlords and tenants in smaller owner-occupied rental properties involve special relationships between the landlord and the tenants residing in the same smaller property. Smaller property owners also have a difficult time understanding and complying with rent and eviction regulations. The Just Cause for Eviction Ordinance recognizes this special relationship and exempts from its coverage owner-occupied properties divided into a maximum of three units."

It appears that the City Council is saying that they are convinced that the landlords are too dumb to grasp the meaning of rent control laws or how to follow them; but, at the same time, they believe that the renters must be wise enough to grasp the significance of the rent laws and follow them completely.

For starters, the people that drafted Measure EE never felt that landlords were too dumb to understand the rent laws. To the contrary, Measure EE was written simply enough to instruct everyone as to the 11 reasons why a landlord may evict. It's written for all to understand, including the allegedly dumb landlords.

It's clearly a double standard for the City Council to claim that the landlords are too dumb to follow the rent laws, but the laws must be enforced rigorously against the renters.

This new declaration by the City Council takes all the rights away from the tenants and gives complete control to the landlords — and they have the nerve to call it a "special relationship."

"There's no doubt that this is really a special relationship for the tenants and landlords," tenant activist Sue Doyle said. "The tenants get fucked while the landlords are allowed to legally empty the tenants' bank accounts during the process before dumping them out upon the streets! It's totally outrageous, and I can't believe that this is really happening.

"It's terrible, and I see no reason why small landlords should be allowed to raise the rents as high as they want. Doesn't the City Council understand what happens to tenants that are being ripped off by unscrupulous landlords? If this is allowed to pass into law, not only will it affect the tenants presently residing in the affected units, but this will set into motion a whole cycle of rent scams and evictions that will occur for many years ahead down the road, over and over again in those very same properties."

Indeed, the city staff report — submitted to the full City Council before the vote took place — precisely spells out what occurs when the housing market becomes deregulated, and offers a bleak assessment of its effects on tenant populations where deregulation has occurred.

The staff report advised the Oakland City Council that all major studies of the effects of rent regulation demonstrate that the results are lower rents; and conversely, when deregulated, the rents tend to rise — in some cases, dramatically. Studies have shown that in Boston, the rents rose 50 percent when deregulated, and 36 percent in Cambridge when deregulated from 1994-1997. Homelessness became a huge issue in both cities after the rental housing market became deregulated, according to homeless activists in the Boston area.

The Oakland City Council is carrying out a full-blown plan to gentrify the flatlands of Oakland by the displacement of low-income renters. The staff report finds that the low-income renters of the flatlands will be most affected by the ordinance once it's fully implemented.

The city staff's report concludes that the exemption from rent control will increase the rental price of lower-income units, and increase the profits of the rental units, thus allowing the purchasers of property to qualify for higher loan amounts based upon the increased cash flow. The report goes on to say that this will, in turn, be likely to increase the sale price of the properties involved.

In other words, the City Council's proposed new ordinance is good for realtors, bankers, and landlords; but it's bad for the renters getting fleeced during the never-ending process of rent hikes. This scheme does not produce more housing units, and only further exploits the renters that lose their rights to fight against unfair rent increases or unfair evictions.

Furthermore, the report states that this new ordinance provides a legal means for unscrupulous landlords to evade rent control by creating sham occupancy or ownership at the properties. Despite these concerns clearly stated in the staff report, the City Council willingly gave its approval to unscrupulous landlords to rob the renters blind. The councilmembers who voted to repeal rent control in these 3,000 units are evidently willing to look the other way, and ignore the cries of the victims being fleeced by the landlords.

The staff report concludes that deregulated rents will rise to market levels, and exemption from rent control will result in a loss of lower-income rental units. In addition, the report found that there is no evidence that rent control in Oakland has ever led to blighted conditions.

When considering that San Francisco does not exempt properties with three units or less from rent control, and in Berkeley the properties must have been owner-occupied since 1979 to seek an exemption from rent control, Oaklanders feel that this City Council can never justify their horrendous actions to the average renter.

Oakland renters already are demanding that the City Council dump this unjust proposal immediately. Originally, the measure was put on the July 29th consent calendar, where it was expected to be routinely passed. As a result of tenants denouncing the measure, the final vote has been delayed until September 16.

That will give Oakland renters time to mobilize. Tenants are already planning to show up at Oakland City Hall on September 16 to put up a fight.

For more information, feel free to call Lynda Carson at (510) 763-1085.

QUESTIONS

by Claire J. Baker

Have you touched the hand that
touched the hand
that touched the hand of god…

Did the spirit
even at a distance
several times removed
spark an epiphany so that
walking in evergreen woods
pruning a garden
setting out the garbage
shoveling snow, saying hello
to a loved one never again
would feel the same…

Imagine you yourself touch god
but no spoken words come
so you paint a picture
or your neighbor's fence
groom a dog, sing a song
right a wrong
bake bread for the homeless
hold a dinner for the lonely
compose a piano sonata
for the ages…

Fallen Angels

by Claire J. Baker

We either plunged or floated
down to earth, our halos
flying off as in a storm.

A poet leans against a bar,
and ponders why:
Nirvana weakened wings?
Impatience jaded
sunset's vivid tune?
Restlessness became
our middle name?
We were too rough
with kinder angels?
Too often longed to meet
our wilder self?

We're perfectly imperfect
and so numerous!
What a babbling chorus
of variations yearning
even searching for a theme
which is itself comprised
of variations…

Street Spirit Vendor Program

The *Street Spirit* vendor program is managed by Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS). More than 100 homeless vendors now sell *Street Spirit* in Berkeley and Oakland. The vendor program provides many jobs to homeless people in bad economic times, and is a positive alternative to panhandling. Vendors keep all of the money they make from selling *Street Spirit.*

Vendors attend training sessions to learn to interact respectfully and positively with the public. Vendors are not supposed to ask for donations beyond the $1.00 selling price of the newspaper, and they are instructed not to verbally or physically harass customers. Vendors follow The Rules of the Street, printed at right.

Please buy Street Spirit only from badged vendors. If you have questions or concerns about the vendor program, call Ray Jackson, Vendor Coordinator, at BOSS at (510) 843-6800, box #110.

The Rules of the Street

for *Street Spirit* Vendors

1. Don't sell the newspaper while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
2. Don't solicit donations above the $1.00 cover price of the paper.
3. Don't sell *Street Spirit* without proper I.D. badge.
4. Don't fight with other vendors over sales pitches or territories.
5. Don't use racial, sexist or foul language while selling *Street Spirit.*
6. Don't verbally or physically harass anyone who refuses to buy a paper.
7. Don't obstruct the public way or sell papers in off-limit areas.
8. Don't sell other products or papers while wearing the Street Spirit I.D.
9. Don't supply newspapers to non-badged persons.

The Theft of God

by Richard Edmondson

It was appalling — the worst theft in history.
The loss of an art treasure from the national museum
Would have been better.
Appropriated like private property,
He had once been the God of everyone,
The way, the truth and the life
Made democratically available to all.

This theft was carried out in a manner
Not wholly dissimilar to the theft
Of the airwaves, or the
Rape of Africa and her diamonds,
No longer ours, left instead with
Rock music and a pair of
Nike tennis shoes made in Indonesia,

With computers and failed dot.coms,
But no God — no, in this theft God,
The slave liberator, had been turned into
Something else: a prayer breakfast God for
Corporate CEOs, hideously banal
And self-serving, an abysmally fiendish God
Who guided the murderers of doctors

And led sports teams to victory,
A God of whom we were ashamed,
And from whom we dissociated ourselves,
Making this theft complete —
Lethe — the Greek river of Hades —
The waters drunk causing
Forgetfulness of the past…

Forgotten — that Jesus Christ
("Sell everything you own and give the money
To the poor") had been murdered for
Leading a nonviolent socialist revolution,
***Apechei*, it is sufficient, it is enough,**
Murdered for turning the world upside down
More spectacularly even than Marx.

Isaiah could not prevent this lapse of memory.
Nor could Matthew, Mark, John, or Luke,
Or even James — the most radically
Class conscious of all — but first things first:
When did this theft begin?
Perhaps with the good deeds of
The Emperor Constantine,
Or the slave traders of the eighteenth century,

Or the robber barons of the nineteenth,
Or the great capital industrialists of the twentieth,
Each taking the sculpture of the bust of God
And changing its shape, molding it into
Something different, each having the power
To do so, until it was unrecognizable —
The world made right side up again.

Aggelos, pleroo.

Cold

by Richard Edmondson

It reaches the back of your neck
Even when you think you're curled
Pretty far down in your sleeping bag.
Israel kicked the Palestinians again,
And the economy is good.
I count the years of my life.
They stretch out behind me like
A path to infinity.
The millennium is ahead.
People think the world is going to end or something.
Or something.
This is the winter of '99.
Ninety nine bottles of beer on the wall.
They all have frost on the glass.
The Rolling Stones said, "Gimme Shelter."
Where do America's homeless take shelter
When all the shelters are full?
Out here —
Where there's no need of a refrigerator to keep
The cheese and the mayonnaise cold,
Where INSIDE is OUTSIDE,
And OUTSIDE is INSIDE,
And the night clatters noisily by,
And someone who thinks he is a vampire
Slits our throats while we sleep.
"Someone saved my life tonight" —
Don't bother saving my life, Elton John.
Sing your sorrows to the dead Diana.
We homeless are free.
We have become free-floating ions,
Tearing cross-dimensionally through the universe.

FCC Threatens San Francisco Liberation Radio

from page five

How did such a study come about and who requisitioned it? Backtrack to January of 2000. A different FCC chairman was in power, under the previous administration. After years of effort, media activists had succeeded in persuading the FCC to adopt regulations legalizing low-power FM (LPFM) stations of 100 watts in power or less. The measure means that churches, schools, and community groups in many areas of the country would be able to apply for licenses and operate their own radio stations.

But it didn't quite turn out that way. Congress, largely at the behest of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and National Public Radio (NPR), passed a bill, grotesquely named the "Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act," largely gutting the FCC's new LPFM service.

Instead of third-adjacent channel spacing requirements — the standard governing full-power FM stations — the criterion for low-power FM stations was to be even *more* stringent, requiring all LPFM stations to be located at least *four* channels distant from their nearest neighbors on the dial. This policy would remain in effect until such time as a study could be conducted determining if LPFM stations could operate interference-free at third-adjacent channels.

The NAB and NPR issued dire predictions about "oceans of interference," and Congress — possibly many of the same ones now shedding crocodile tears about "alarming" levels of media concentration — gave the broadcast industry what it wanted. Licensed LPFM was frozen out of existence in all but the most remote, geographically isolated areas of the country.

The airwaves of America's cities, filled with the ravings of right-wing talk show lunatics, had to be carefully protected from any fictitious threat of interference.

Now fast forward to July of 2003. The long awaited study arrives, and the "oceans of interference" have "proven to be puddles," in the words of Pete Tridish of the Philadelphia-based Prometheus Radio Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to facilitating the growth of LPFM.

"I hope that the wild goose chase for interference — and the claim that a dinky 100-watt community station can cause this kind of problem for a 20,000-watt commercial station — can finally come to a close," Tridish said. "I know some lobbyists at the National Association of Broadcasters may not know what to do without Low Power FM radio to beat up on anymore, but I'm sure they can find gainful employment searching for other imaginary things like African uranium shipments to Iraq."

The bad news for us at San Francisco Liberation Radio is that the Mitre study probably doesn't do us much good. The study concerns itself only with third-adjacent channel protections. We at SFLR broadcast at *second-adjacent* spacing from our neighbors on the dial. In a city as densely populated as San Francisco, there simply is no other available space on the dial.

So, we must be causing interference, right? The question can perhaps be answered by pointing to the fact that neither of our neighbors on the dial have ever complained of interference from our transmissions. Never. Not once in our ten years on the air.

And, in point of fact, it was just that — a second-adjacent separation rule — that the LPFM movement had strenuously advocated for leading up to the FCC declaration of January 2000. We knew it was possible to put micro stations in at second-adjacent frequencies because we had done it.

But again, alas, it wasn't to be. The FCC, feeling the heat from the broadcast industry on the one hand, and the public — overwhelmingly in favor of LPFM legalization — on the other, struck what it apparently felt was a compromise. The third-adjacent rule was offered up.

But then, as already alluded to above, the compromise was compromised. Congress did what it does best: cower. The media moguls won, as they usually do.

How did it effect us at SFLR? Very little, actually. Throughout the 10 years of our existence, we have tread consistently beyond the frontiers of perceived legality. And though we have submitted two applications to the FCC (both denied), we are apparently, even to this day, considered still beyond the pale.

"There is a history of at least 16 contacts of an official nature between SFLR and the FCC (see exhibit A, ' Schedule of Contacts with FCC', attached hereto)," writes Bay Area attorney Peter Franck in SFLR's response to the FCC. "There is in addition a record on your web page of at least 2 further actions taken by the FCC with respect to SFLR but without notice to the station (see items 17 and 18 on Exhibit A)."

Indeed, the FCC never bothered to directly notify us — even though my own name and address were on the forms — that it had turned down our license applications. We had to learn by going to the FCC's web site.

"In terms of the real politic of the thing, I think we have a good chance of getting third-adjacent passed (through Congress)," Tridish said. "Unfortunately, second-adjacent is not even on the table, although it should be."

And these were some of my thoughts as I was sitting in the office of Supervisor Bevan Dufty one day during these whirlwind weeks of July, in the immediate aftermath of the FCC visit. I've always wondered what the life of a lobbyist would be like and lately I've gotten a chance to find out. Just a few days before, I and five others had spoken during the public comment section of the Board of Supervisors' meeting. And now here I am again, along with another volunteer from the station, at S.F. City Hall, the two of us hoping to probe, to push further.

A bill has been introduced by Matt Gonzalez, president of the Board of Supervisors. We've also heard that Tom Ammiano, Chris Daly, and Jake McGoldrick will probably support us. But support from these alone, the board's most unabashedly left-leaning members, will not carry the day for us. We need people like Dufty on our side.

Hershow Al-Barazi, Dufty's legislative aide, asks for something "with teeth" that would lend credibility to our cause. My friend from the station ticks off for him a number of programs currently airing, including one hosted by a group of queer youth. Dufty represents the Castro District — the heart of the city's gay community.

There's also a home turf factor here. The district is the sector of the city in which SFLR's studio and transmitter are actually located. Thus Dufty's support is crucial.

Al-Barazi is pleasant, and seems generally supportive; however, he is unable, in the end, to give us a definite promise of Dufty's support. Less than 24 hours later, however, comes the news that not only Dufty, but also Daly and Ammiano have signed on to the legislation.

The next Sunday at noon, during the SFLR station meeting, there is continued debate over what to do about the FCC threat. The station has recently acquired an expensive new mixing board. Should we move it out of the studio in anticipation of a raid? The people who host the SFLR evening news are considering doing the show from the IMC office in the Redstone Building. There's talk of forming a press release committee. On and on it goes.

Then this morning comes, and two e-mails pop up on my computer screen that particularly catch my eye.

One of them bears the news that the FCC has shut down a licensed LPFM station in Taylors, South Carolina. The action is said to have been based upon "interference complaints from a full-power FM broadcaster." It's also reputedly the first known instance of the FCC silencing a licensed LPFM station. Frank Patterson, the station's founder, who is described as a "respected insurance executive," pronounces himself "shocked at this atrocity."

The other e-mail is equally intriguing. Death Row journalist Mumia Abu Jamal has recorded some station I.D.s for SFLR, it is stated. There's talk of posting them as mp3 files on the SFLR web site. The writer adds: "I'm also starting to record interviews for PSAs saying 'I support SFLR.'— it would be cool to have a montage of voices on one clip."

I walk out my door and look up at the sky. It's a bright, sunny afternoon.

Fionnuala

by Richard Edmondson

We were talking about how you were
Returning to Ireland
That day as we made soup for the poor
Of San Francisco, and the world
Hovered on the brink of war,
And how beautiful you were, I thought,
And how much I would like to kiss you,
Yet how tragically ephemeral and small
Such gifts against these explosions of history,
And all
The homeless lined up when we took the soup
Down to the U.N. Plaza...
The U.N. Plaza... where civilization
Seemed to have come
Full circle at last:
With humankind once again huddled together
In prehistoric-like tribes
For mutual benefit and protection —
And as we served the soup and fruit cups
The evening grew cold, and in the lee
Of the plaza the fog rolled in
From somewhere terribly far out over the sea.

*The poems on pages 5 and 14 are from **American Bus Stop**, by Richard Edmondson, Libertad Press.*

The Suitcase Clinic: Oasis for the Homeless

from page one

"Thanks to the clinic, Osha Neumann joined me in court to defend myself after I landed in Santa Rita Jail from the sleeping offense," said Julia, "and when we went to court for the hearing, it became apparent that the cop who arrested me never bothered to show up to press for charges or for a prosecution. This all smacks of a hustle on the poor, and people like me get locked up for no good reason other than to provide the corrupt system with fresh new victims."

While having her eyes tested, Julia said that she last had an eye examination back in Seattle in 1991 while her job was to work with homeless people there. "I am long overdue for an eye exam," she said.

Julia made it through the eye exam and lottery process to get some new eyeglasses and was given a time and date for an appointment at the University Eye Center on the Berkeley campus.

According to Christopher ("Toff") Peabody, a volunteer coordinator at the clinic along with Lauren Wu, the Suitcase Clinic pays for the glasses and the business donates the time for the eye examinations. The lenses for the glasses are the most expensive item the clinic has to deal with in its annual budget, said Toff.

Toff had a look of serenity and surefootedness about him as he kept a keen eye on the proceedings at the clinic, while he gracefully helped the volunteers to keep the clinic operating smoothly. If a crisis arose while I was there to observe the clinic in motion, I certainly could not spot it; yet it all seemed so casually run.

After four years at the clinic, Toff has the experience to keep it running smoothly without making it look like he was overexerting himself or acting like a big shot to control every movement of the volunteers or clients. A whisper here and a whisper there among his staff/volunteers, and people were moving about in a friendly manner to where they were needed to offer the services to the homeless.

According to Toff, on any given Tuesday evening at the general clinic, the one chiropractor may see at least 12-13 clients a night; the hair stylists may have 10-15 clients; the legal clinic sees at least 3-10 clients; and there are normally about 10 optometrist appointments a night.

Students also run a class sponsored by Health and Medical Sciences, "so we are responsible for the training as well, which is also part of the magic of the clinic," said Toff.

FOOT WASHING IS FAVORED

Lester of Louisiana, a homeless man who has been a client at the general clinic for the past 13 years, stated that everyone should have a home. Lester was having a foot wash when I met him, and said it was his favorite service at the clinic. "To me, this is a social visit to see my friends and a chance to have a good foot massage at the same time," Lester said.

On average, four to six foot washers at the clinic serve around 16 clients each evening, gently rubbing the kinks out of people's tired and tender feet. It takes around 10 minutes to offer someone a good foot wash and massage, said Jenifer Stitchman of Washington State. Erica, Bernard, Kripa, and Andrew also had their hands full washing people's feet; while other clients patiently waited their turn for what many say is their favorite service.

As one of five foot washers in motion this evening, Jenifer Stitchman said, "We do this out of our love for humanity. I am a volunteer here three to four nights a month, and it's our way to express our love of humanity in a safe way while interacting with others that may be feeling abused by a society that treats them like criminals just because they are poor or homeless."

An ancient tradition, footwashing was practiced by the followers of Christ as a way to express their love of their fellow human beings. Among early Christians, it was seen as an act of selfless service that shows the basic equality of all people.

According to Toff, the staff and volunteers get their training from the Health and Medical Sciences Department at the University of California before joining the Suitcase Clinic. I counted at least 23 volunteers and staff at the debriefing meeting after the clinic closed down on July 15, as they all sat in a circle to discuss what they had experienced that evening.

"There's plenty of volunteers," said Toff, "and the students and church donate everything here that you see to make this all happen." Toff said that Lauren Wu has been "doing some amazing work at the clinic," along with all the volunteers who give up a few nights a month to spend some time with the homeless population.

The 13-year-old clinic is a model used in other university towns and is spreading across the nation to break the barriers that have criminalized the poor and homeless.

"Most of the student volunteers have not been homeless; but this does not mean that we cannot relate to the social and medical needs of the homeless community," said Toff.

Years ago, medical students at UC Berkeley realized the need to offer services to the poor, and with the support of U.C. Professor Allen Steinbach, they first opened their doors to the poor back in 1989. "We now proudly have attorney Tirien Steinbach from the East Bay Community Law Center to help run the legal clinic, who is the daughter of Allen Steinbach," Toff said. "And with Osha Neumann and Tirien Steinbach to run the legal clinic, we have been able to help out many homeless people having legal problems."

According to Toff, the clinic is a case-working model which appeals to students learning to treat the whole person, rather than just a single illness. "The clinic is also a social experience with boundaries," said Toff, "and it's a way for everyone to be a part of something that breaks down all class and cultural barriers while serving the needs of the community at large."

The Suitcase Clinic is presently divided into three different locations: the General Clinic, the Women's Clinic, and the Youth Clinic, with each having a similar mission to reach out to the various members of the community.

MONDAY NIGHT WOMEN'S CLINIC

Jen Troia of Maryland works with the East Bay Community Law Center and, as a volunteer, helps to operate the Suitcase Legal Clinic at the Dwight Way Women's Shelter on Monday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. With two advocates and one attorney, they serve at least four to eight women per evening at the Women's Shelter. Having two years of law school already behind her, part of her internship involves working with the clinic for two hours per week plus following up on the cases she works on.

"I love this job because I feel like I'm helping people, and someday I would like to do civil rights work," said Jen Troia.

MONDAY NIGHT YOUTH CLINIC

The Youth Clinic run by Ryan Houk is also known by some as the Punk Music Clinic and is open from 6-9 p.m. on Monday evenings at St. Mark's Church in Berkeley. It may seem to be loud and chaotic to the casual observer listening to the music and video games blasting away; but, behind the scenes, it is actually very well organized, with a doctor in one corner, an acupuncturist in a different corner, and in yet another corner, a veterinarian has set up shop to help out those that bring in their pets from off the streets.

The youth help out to cook the food for that evening's dinner. They also help to do the foot washing and even produce their own magazine, known as *The Zine*. It took a lot of work to gain the trust of the youth, Toff said.

SHARE — THE HEART AND SOUL

SHARE stands for Searching How to Achieve Respect & Empowerment. It is basically a focus group of people who get together at the General Clinic on Tuesday evenings from 7:30-9 p.m. to brainstorm ideas and the issues of the day faced by the clinic, its volunteers and clients. Some believe that SHARE is the heart and soul of the Suitcase Clinic.

The idea for the legal clinic came out of SHARE when it became obvious to the volunteers that homeless people have many legal problems that regular public defenders do not have the time or funding to resolve. Many other great ideas for the clinic came out of SHARE, and they wish to stay focused on civil rights issues.

At the end of each clinic session, Toff, Lauren, Jen, or Ryan sit down with the other volunteers for a final 15-minute debriefing before heading home, as a means to check in for the evening with one another and to discuss security issues or any other issues that may arise during the course of the clinic sessions. On any given evening, as many as 20-25 volunteers may show up to assist at the General Clinic, and it really helps to process what they experience each session, said Toff.

Christopher (Toff) Peabody emphatically stated that the biggest problem that the homeless face on a daily basis is the lack of low-income or affordable housing. No matter what we can do to help out the homeless, he said, it is clear that they all need some kind of housing.

Another thing that is very clear is that the Suitcase Clinic is the only place around where the homeless can drop in to find friendly people who are ready to ask them: How are you doing?

For more information about the Suitcase Clinic, call (510) 643-6786.

Under a Rock and in a Cave

by Joan Clair

"Lift up the stone, you will find me there." *— Gospel of Thomas*

Under a rock and in a cave are homes for the brave with no address, who do not want to be addressed by anything less than what can be saved under a rock and in a cave.

Earnest Conversation

(for Linda)

by Claire J. Baker

**A new friend, a retired CEO,
asked me what she should do
for the homeless along Shattuck.
I suggested she try eye contact.**

**She took the idea one step further:
introduced herself to a woman
whose illness toppled her into
homelessness.
(*Street Spirit* carried the story.)
They had a pleasant exchange.**

**I told my friend there are
so many cracks in the system,
so many ways to slip through,
that it's easier for the forsaken
to live in the eye of a hurricane.**

**Here's a woman, who set up an
entire internet system for a
national telecommunications corp.,
now baffled, intrigued, wanting to
connect with street people
in the town where she lives.**

**Later she told me she helps
Habitat for Humanity build homes
in Oakland… Linda is working out
a humanitarian internet,
a compassionate noblesse oblige:
"Build thee more stately mansions,
O my soul…"**

The Quick and the Dead

by Chris Trian

**I'm in St. Joseph the Worker
Catholic Church.
I'm at the end of my rope.
Of course,
tomorrow they'll issue more rope.
I know that time is on my side.
Am I fortunate?**

**In the streets
the quick and the dead
move like armies
whose final battle looms.
But this church is empty.
I have never been here
when it was not empty.
Yet I feel at peace here.**

**Is this, then, the answer?
Is peace a great emptiness
and war a great fullness?
And to that fullness do we go
brandishing ideas, theories,
cruelties, kindnesses?
And quickly do we die?
And deadly are the streets?
And holy is the war?
Yet why is God's house empty?**

**And what is God
but a big empty room?
A victory of space
over time.
And what is man
but a monumental defeat?
There are no more homeless
because there are no more homes,
only a vast, occupied Swarm.
Ants moving with mechanical sureness.
Some carry burdens
ten times their size.
Men in suits
Girls in shorts so hot
they'd melt the sun
all races, all souls.**

**Zion is Zion is Zion,
yet the mountain
is as empty as this church.
Because no one dares to climb.
Our leaders too are bugs.
Everything is bugged.
Yet a huge muscular arm
holds out a single red rose
and nobody takes it.**

**I have found God.
Its name is emptiness,
where the poems
bounce off the walls
like colors
through stained glass.**

**Art is a cool clean church
in a hot sweaty hunger
Sadists with the eyes of bats
beat the world
through the howling streets.
And every day the world
is Crucified.
And every night
we beg our lovers,
if we are fortunate enough
to have lovers,
to tell us why.
Why? Why? Why?
When that rose is offered
and not taken.
And the church is empty.
And the tears of the people
flow through the streets
like wine,
like water,
every single day.**

Marcher Harassed at Freeman Memorial

The problem is not simply the absence of a detox center. Police routinely detain, harass, and jail people who are different or who are ill. Until politicians redirect those priorities, tragedies such as Kevin Freeman's are simply a matter of time.

by Carol Denney

Shortly before the memorial march for Kevin Freeman in People's Park on June 28, UC Police Officer Vargas "detained" a marcher who was discreetly applying body paint in a circle of trees and bushes, although no complaint had been lodged by any park user.

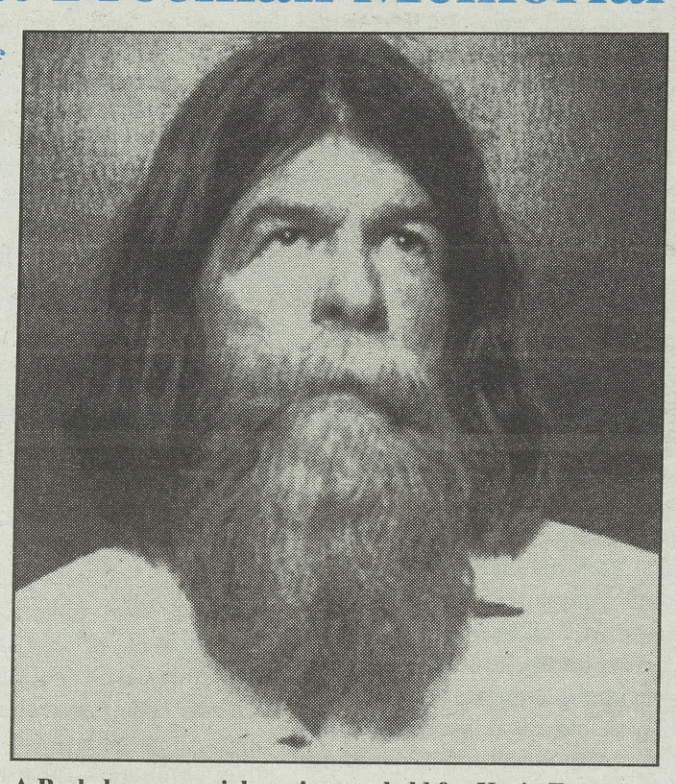
Officer Vargas became agitated when park users approached to witness the "detention," and called for back-up. She stated that "things would go worse" for the detainee if those utilizing their right to observe did not leave. The witnesses, who continued to exercise their right to observe, recorded her curiously prejudiced lecture on clothing to the detainee.

The detainee, Debbie Moore, seated herself on the ground as directed, and explained in a soft voice that her body paint and costume were part of an expression of mourning for the murdered man being memorialized. Back-up officers Samuels and Zuniga responded to Officer Vargas' call and were directed to watch her while they ran her identifying information through a computer to check for warrants. None were found.

By the time Officer Vargas finally released Moore, two more UC police officers joined the scene, a distinctive showing for the twelve or so marchers planning to walk together to a local church in memory of Kevin Freeman, Charles Hunter, and others who died on the street.

The well-attended memorial at the Berkeley Unitarian Church included a Choctaw ceremony, remembrances for many homeless people, and at least one politician, Berkeley City Councilmember Kriss Worthington, who emphasized the need for a local detoxification center, something Alameda County does not currently have.

It goes without saying that alcohol-related illnesses should not be a jail or death sentence for homeless people;



A Berkeley memorial service was held for Kevin Freeman.

drinking problems on frat row in Berkeley are treated differently. But in this writer's opinion, it is not simply the absence of a detoxification center which is the problem. Police are routinely detaining, harassing, and jailing people who are different or who are ill. Until our politicians redirect those priorities, tragedies such as Kevin Freeman's are simply a matter of time.

The Berkeley City Council currently has a lopsided "progressive" majority by anyone's measure, which now has enough votes to redirect police priorities if it chooses. The law against nudity, passed only a few years ago, could be rescinded. The effort to put a moratorium on the use of pepper spray is another measure that fell one vote short during the days when the council tended to split, five votes to four.

Politicians never paddle through politically choppy waters unless the people insist. While the effort to lobby for detox center funding is laudable, there is no funding or waiting necessary for a redirection of police priorities such that the merely eccentric or ill are left in peace.

Song for Kevin Freeman

by Carol Denney

the world isn't made up of atoms, you know
it is made up of stories and songs
about all of the people who did their small best
to tell all of the rights from the wrongs
Kevin was someone who'd played all his cards
and his world kept on coming apart
he smiled like a star through a forested sky
at the few who would look in his heart

now, this is a town with a certain renown
and it's proud of its liberal ways
but if you are poor it will show you the door
or just slam the door right in your face
Kevin they figured they'd just throw in jail
again and again and again
with a stay-away order that meant half the town
was forbidden, the half with his friends

chorus:
down near the bay where it's foggy all day
the stars are much harder to see
it takes all your heart just to play a small part
in the story

in the old days they'd shanghai a man
who would waken and find himself sailing away
these days they just outlaw everything so
they can pick and choose who to waylay
Kevin they put in a cell with a man who had
once attacked cell mates before
Kevin's life ended by angry bare hands
alone in his cell on the floor

down near the bay where it's foggy all day
the stars are much harder to see
it takes all your heart just to play a small part
in the story

this is a town that the rest of the world
always thinks is ahead of the game
but Kevin could tell you a story or two
and there's plenty gets treated the same
officials who vie for the spotlight will tell you
they're sorry the way it went down
but Kevin was cost all the little he'd got
and it's still going round and around

down near the bay where it's foggy all day
the stars are much harder to see
it takes all your heart just to play a small part
in the story

DREAM

by Kevin McFarren

Tonight I dreamed of you
As we danced in the Park.
We were free, yes, free!
But it was just a lie.
I slept under a rock;
You under a pine.
My dream had us dancing
Under the star-lit sky.
The smell of oleander in the air.
Then that smell went to hell.
Big guys.
Blue uniforms.
Flashlights.
Large guns.
The Park just ain't what it used to be!

Homeless, On The Street Of Dreams

by Alan Goldfarb

Under the palms and potted trees
he remembers an island, a paradise,
until a shell took off his foot.
Now he stops to chat
with the mannequin in the mall.
He wonders if she's real.
***I'm looking for my life*, he says,**
hoping to stir her straw a bit.
Your wife? she asks.
No, my life!
Oh, there's nothing like that
in the store, she says.
But I know I've lost it somewhere…
perhaps in Housewares, or Tiny Tots?
Have you tried the store just down
the street, the one that's open late?
Oh, I'll try, I'll try…
But they know down deep,
given the short life of things on
the shelf, he'll never find it himself.

You Say What!!

(on the vehicularly housed folks)

by A. Faye Hicks

You say it has to be an expensive
vehicle you reside in,
To classify you not homeless
I never see one of those towed

Just where is that line drawn
Who does the drawing, Who, Who!!!

The Political Policy Makers
The Poor, Poor Nation
The Voting Population

Just who draws that thin line
Is it drawn with a Racial Attitude?

Just who draws that line between
love and hate, rich and poor
I am rich with the Love of God
Even though my house is nonexistent

Is it drawn at the City Hall
Is it drawn at a Political Ball
While you are having a
little drinky or two

You say what?
Your swanky vehicle is a "Love Nest"
and passes the test
Mine is a "Viper's Nest"
and needs to be wiped out!

JUST who draws that Hellish Line!
What's yours is yours, and
what's Mine is Nothing

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

by Lynda Cobden

There are stones of indifference,
There is tunnel vision,
Twenty five dollars a day for a room
equals a lot of recycled cans.
The blinds are already closed.
Give us this day our daily bread.

self-sufficiency

by Randy Fingland

there is more than one way
to skin a light
from the eyes that shine
in a child's face

bring him into a world
at war with itself
set her in the street
amid warm walls of rubble

say this is your home
be glad you were born
now get busy
you've got a mouth to feed

without electricity

by Randy Fingland

who
has never
trusted a ceiling
of sky
never knows
the stars
in person

childhood for sale

by Randy Fingland

initiation into consumerhood
is the rule:

rather than upholding
the excitement
of innocent play

to maintain
the onrush
of material waste
that runs a river
of obsolescence
through the average
american life

The Reaper

by Michael Creedon

After midnight a long black hearse
Cruises up Telegraph Avenue to Berkeley
Checking out the people on the street;
Dwight, Haste, Durant, to Bancroft,
Other named streets, a low-key spectacle
In death. Who didn't make it today?
Behind the wheel, smoked glass,
The driver and his sidekick, behind
Black curtains swing their heads
From left to right, seeking.
Some people call it the meat wagon.
It's rarely empty, what with one thing
And another. Telegraph Avenue
Is a long street, striking through
Some heavy neighborhoods in the dark.

Sometimes I'm out there at night,
Watching the penultimate hearse slide by,
Trying to look in the windows, hoping
To catch a glimpse as Pale Rigor Mortis
Sets in. At those times I think
Of how lively a body is on the street,
Colorful, moving, gesticulating,
Florid and wildly dressed.
It's not a great stretch
From blood to embalming fluid.
The hearse provides the street people
With a dignified exit. I am
The only one who notices.
Nobody sees me.
Everyone thinks death is raw and bloody,
Odoriferous, hushed,
Consisting of mesmerism,
Flaring sirens, flashing lights,
and turning away.
I see it different.
The street will take you down.
The street claims its own.